रवि शाक्य, इखाछँ, यल

Rato Matsyendranath of

Patan and Bungamati

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Rato Matsyendranath of Patan and Bungamati

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Foreward

The car-driving of Rato Matsyendranath, the god who resides in his twin temples at Bungamati and Patan is the biggest Newar festival that is annually celebrated in Patan amidst lengthy preparations and complicated rites completed over different seasons of the year. This involves hundreds of people in different capacities, and finally when the deity, duly enshrined within the car, journeys through the town, there is tumultuous joy in the hearts of the teeming votaries who are drawn alike from all sects. A sense of gratification overwhelms them that there will be rain and plenty in the fields once again this year owing to the god of compassion. It is perhaps the only festival which can boast of such a long tradition in the Nepal Valley. Perhaps no other festival presents so spectacular a sight to the foreigners as this one. Fr. John Locke, who originally wrote this work as a part of his post-graduate studies at the Tribhuvan University, chose this subject, hence, not quite unnaturally.

Fr. Locke has done an extremely useful piece of work in this book by compiling all the important facts and traditions connected with Bunga deo, alias Rato Matsyendranath. The work illustrates how there is an enormous amount of material for the cultural study of which can be intelligently tapped, as he has done. The Institute of Nepalese and Asiatic Studies is pledged to encourage and support this type of study and invites scholars and researchers to undertake it here.

The author has spared no efforts to make the book well-documented, objective and informative. Some of the riddles about the origin and name of the deity will continue to haunt our minds. It is only more works like this which may find for us the true answers one day.

Dr. Prayag Raj Sharma
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Preface

Interest in Nepal has grown by leaps and bounds over the past twenty years. First it was the adventurers who sped to Nepal, a great stronghold of unconquered mountain peaks. More recently scholars from all over the world have been attracted by the vast cultural treasures which Nepal holds-treasures of language, religious literature, art, architecture, social customs, and history. Nor has the interest been confined to foreigners. Tribhuvan University has its own Department of Nepalese History, Culture and Archeology, and if there is any area of scholarship where the university should have its own special competence it is here.

After twelve years in Nepal-an "age" by Nepali reckoning-the author was privileged to pursue the course of studies offered by this department. The survey of Nepalese Culture offered by this department would not have been complete without at least an attempt at an in depth study of one facet of Nepalese Culture. This present work is a result of that study. It does not claim to sound the depths of one aspect of Nepalese culture, but it is hoped that it will offer some insights into the development of this cult and festival and hence into the complex cultural process involved in the growth and development of the whole culture of the Valley of Nepal. I must express my gratitude to the Institute of Nepal Studies of Tribhuvan University and the Dean of the Institute, Dr. Prayag Raj Sharma for undertaking to publish this work. The feasts and festivals constitute only one aspect of the culture of the Valley, yet it is hoped that this study will show the abundance of material that is available for research in this area alone, and hence offer some encouragement to future students of Nepalese culture at the University.

I am most grateful to Dr. Hit Narayan Jha, the Head of the Department, who first suggested that I undertake this research as a fitting complement to the courses offered by the department and who personally guided the research.

It would be impossible to mention all the people who helped to make my research possible by a generous sacrifice of their time. Special thanks are due, though, to the generous help afforded by the staff of the Keshar Library; to Sri Manabajra Bajracharya who read through the whole manuscript and offered many valuable suggestions; to Sri Ashakaji Bajracharya who outlined for me the events of the Chariot Festival and the rubrics of the festival as observed today; to Mr. Stephen Greenwold who was most generous with his time and the materials he collected in Bungamati during the course of his own research as a Doctoral candidate for the University of London; and lastly to Sri Ramnath Khanal and Sri Bhairav Risal, teachers at St. Xavier's School, who offered many valuable suggestions and insights.

I am aware that even after spending an "age" in Nepal I approach such a topic with a different background from that of the Nepali scholar. This has some advantages. A different approach, from a different background may generate fresh insights. It also has its pitfalls. One can sometimes miss the import of certain aspects of a culture which no one has explained to him for the simple reason that they are patently obvious to the native. In view of this I would ask the indulgence of the reader if he finds that I have fallen into any of these pits, and I would heartily welcome suggestions and corrections. What errors the reader may find should not be imputed to the many Nepalis who have been so generous with their assistance.

Introduction

Anyone who has been to the Valley of Nepal, especially those who have stayed here for some time, are familiar with the Chariot Festival, or Ratha Jātra, or Rāto Matsyendranath in Patan. It is a colourful and fascinating festival usually beginning some time in April and lasting until the first week in June. Though their calendar is full of feasts and festivals, the people of Patan and the surrounding farming communities make this one of the most important social and religious events of the year. It marks the beginning of the rainy season and Matsyendranath is looked upon as the dispenser of the annual rain.

Rain is reliably abundant in the Valley of Nepal, and since the whole prosperity of the farming communities of the Valley depends on adequate summer rain, it is easy to see why there is such devotion to Matsyendranath and why his annual festival is kept with such care. Though he does not assume such an important role in the lives of the other farming communities and even less in the lives of the more urbanized people of Kathmandu, everyone is familiar with the festival and tries to make it to Patan at least for the last event of the festival, the bhoṭo jātra, or the 'showing of the shirt' of Matsyendranath.

From a cultural and anthropological standpoint the festival is equally important. It is one of the oldest, uninterrupted festivals kept by the people of the Valley, and into the fabric of this cult are woven the many different religious and cultural strands that have shaped the fabric of the cultural life of the Valley. An investigation of the strands which make up this fabric will reward one with an insight not only into this one curious festival, but into the whole cultural history of the people of the Valley.

The Valley of Nepal is something of a unique cultural unit. Before the unification of Nepal in 1769 its culture developed apart from the rest of what is Nepal today. It knew no outside conquerors before the coming of the King of Gorkha. Except for one brief raid, it was spared the ravishes of the Moslem invasions which destroyed many of the cultural institutions and edifices of North India.

This is not to say that the Valley was not influenced by outside cultural and religious trends. Quite the contrary. From the days of the freedom-loving Licchavis who fled to Nepal in the face of stronger and authoritarian regimes in Magadha, up to the time of the Indian Mutiny and the flight of the widow of Nana Sahib, upheavals in India have driven political and religious leaders of Northern India to seek shelter in the security of the hills. But they did not come as conquerors. Though some of them eventually ruled in Nepal, they first integrated themselves into the culture of the country. Their Brahmanas, Yogis, Siddhas, and Buddhist monks added new life to the religious life of Nepal. They did not destroy what went before, but their new customs, religious rites, and doctrine modified the old, gave it a new interpretation and a new zest.

In India temples and monasteries were destroyed, manuscripts burned and monks put to the sword. In Nepal the old was preserved. Much of what was completely destroyed in India is preserved in Nepal's temples and shrines, the manuscripts in her archives, and in the very lives of her people.

Yet it is not a country of cultural fossils. There are groups of people around the world who are cultural fossils. They have preserved unchanged a language, a religion, a culture that has disappeared. Their culture is a historical curiosity, but it is dead and stagnant.

The culture of the Valley of Nepal, on the other hand, represents a living organism. An individual man grows and his spirit, his whole psychological make-up is shaped by successive influences. Yet he remains the same man who is somehow changed and modified by these influences. So the culture of the Valley of Nepal was shaped and modified by successive influences, but there is a continuity, a living preservation. What went before was not erased, the new was adopted and assimilated.

The cult of Matsyendranath embodies this complex and living tradition. A study of it should enable one to trace the various influences that have shaped the culture of Nepal. However, this is not an easy task. It is not like peeling off the layers of an onion, but rather like analysing a man's writing to see how he was influenced and shaped by the thought of others, though his thought is his own and represents a personal appropriation and synthesis.

This work proposes to study the cult of Matsyendranath. However a complete analysis of the tradition embodied in the tradition of Matsyendranath would be a vast work involving an immense amount of original research. Such a complete analysis is beyond the scope of such a short work. The purpose then of this work is to examine the present festival, and to trace its origin and development in so far as this is possible from secondary sources.

A survey of available secondary sources has been undertaken. Though many people have written of the cult in passing, their works are dealing primarily with history, or a brief survey of the whole of the culture of Nepal; and they usually treat only of one or other aspect of the cult. So far no one has brought all these various aspects together in a single work on Rāto Matsyendranāth. This will be attempted in this thesis. A bare minimum of rather hurried original research has

been undertaken.

It is hoped that the conclusions will draw a rough outline of the cult and its development and thereby point up fruitful areas of further original research.

The thesis will deal with Rāto Matsyendranāth, that is the image kept in the Matsyendranath temple at Patan (and Bungamati) and the cult that has grown up around this image with special emphasis on the annual Chariot Festival. It is not the purpose of this thesis to give an exhaustive treatment of the cult of the Nath Siddha Matsyendranath or of the Bodhisattva Aryalokitesvara as this is found in North India and Nepal. These will be treated only so far as they relate to the subject of Patan's Rāto Matsyendranāth,

An immediate problem is that of what name to use for the deity. The deity is known as Macchendranath (with variant spellings), Matsyendranath, Aryalokitesvara, Lokesvara, Padma-pani, and Bunga Deva, (not to mention identifications with Laksmi, Visnu, and other gods). After going through all of the relevant data one can make a very good case for the thesis that the proper name of the deity, and therefore the one that should be used, is Buñga Deva. Yet this name is currently confined to Patan and Bungamati, seldom used by Nepali writers, and virtually unknown to non-Nepali writers. To select any one of the names seems to prejudice the issue, as it is hoped that this investigation will point to answers to such questions as: Who is this deity? Is this a Hindu or Buddhist Festival? Or both? Or neither? Yet one can hardly settle for some such colourless, neutral expediency as 'the deity', so it has been decided to use the Sanskrit form of the most common name currently used for the deity: Matsyendranāth. This name will be used throughout the thesis except for quotations, and references where the point of the reference is to show the use of different names.

The image this thesis is concerned with is a standing image about three feet high. The red face is plastered over annually with clay and the features artistically drawn in. It is difficult to say just what the image is made of. Some writers speak of a rough-hewn block of wood. Some of the temple attendants in Bungamati say that the bulk of the image is gold with clay plastered over this. No one has seen the gold inside, but they insisted this was true as the image can be lifted only with difficulty by four men. However, others testified that it can be, and is, easily lifted by one man. The legs are clearly made up of a plastered frame. Perhaps the body is the same, perhaps it is a solid block of wood. It is difficult to verify this as the image is always fully clothed, except during certain prescribed ceremonies when only the attendant priests are present or close enough to examine the image carefully.

Following is the transliteration used for spelling Nepali and Sanskrit words in this work. It should be noted that in transcribing Nepali words I have followed current pronunciation rather than a strict transliteration of the Deva Nagri spelling where there is a descrepancy. Thus Nāth (not Nātha), rup (not rupa), mandal (not mandala), etc. A strict transliteration would be not only misleading but an injustice to the Nepali language. For common place names in Nepal, I have used the commonly accepted English spelling.

अ --a	च --c	प --p
आ --ā	छ --ch	फ --ph
इ --i	ज --j	ब --b
ई --ī	झ --jh	भ --bh
उ --u	ञ --ñ	म --m
ऊ --ū	ट --ṭ	य --y
ऋ --ṛi	ठ --ṭh	र --r
ए --e	ड --ḍ	ल --l
ऐ --ai	ढ --ḍh	व --v
ओ --o	ण --ṇ	श --s
औ --au	त --t	ष --ṣ
क --k	थ --th	स --s
ख --kh	द --d	ह --h
ग --g	ध --dh	ः --ḥ
घ --gh	न --n	ँ --ñ
ङ --n		

Table of Contents

Chapter		Page
I.	THE TWO TEMPLES OF RĀTO MATSYENDRANATH	1
	Taha Bahal, Patan--The temple of Bungamati--The Panjus.	
II.	THE CHARIOT FESTIVAL	17
	Introduction--The Snan Jātra--The route of the chariot--The Bhoṭo Jātra--The twelve year festival--The chariot of Minnath.	
III.	THE LEGENDS OF MATSYENDRANATH	39
	Buddhist rescensions of the legend--Hindu rescensions of the legend--comparison of the two series of legends--Legends concerning the Bhoṭo Jātra.	
IV.	HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF THE ORIGIN OF THE CULT	61
	Chronological presentation of the historical data in chronicles, inscriptions, thyāsaphus descriptions of the festival by foreigners in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries.	
V.	THE IDENTITY OF RĀTO MATSYENDRANATH	89
	The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara--Matsyendranath the Nath Yogi--Theories concerning the identification of Avalokitesvara, Matsyendranath, and Bungadeva--Conclusion.	
BIBLIOGRAPHY		113

Chapter One

The Temples of Rato Matsyendranath

Rato Matsyendranath has the distinction of being the only deity of the Valley to have two temples. There are, of course, many instances of a number of temples dedicated to the same god, for example, the Ganesh temples in nearly every tol of the city, the many temples devoted to Visnu, etc. However, this is the only case of a specific idol having two temples of residence. The first of the two temples is located in Patan, and the second south-west of Patan in a village called Bungamati. In addition to being separated by some four miles the two temples of Rato Matsyendranath are quite different.

The more commonly referred to temple is the one in Patan, situated south of Mangal Bazar on the road leading to Lagankhel, about two thirds of the distance to Lagankhel. On the east side of the road is the temple to Minnath and on the west side, set back some distance from the road, stands the temple of Rāto Matsyendranath.

Most books refer to it as the temple of Matsyendranath, or Matsyendranath Deval, but it is more commonly known in Patan as Taha Baḥal. Its Sanskrit name is Dharma Kīrti Mahavihāra.

Though the people of Patan call it Taha Bahal, its structure differs from the typical outlay of the bahāl, or vihāra. The vihāra is ordinarily an enclosed quadrangle surrounded by the buildings of the monastery. One enters through a doorway, often elaborately decorated. Immediately opposite the entrance is the temple or principal shrine set into the quadrangle of buildings, and housing the image of Buddha Sakyamuni or the Principal Boddhisattva. The rest of the quadrangle is

made up of the adjoining monastery buildings. The monastery buildings are usually of two stories; the temple may be of two or more stories with one or more tiers of roofs.

Taha Bahal, however, is a free standing temple surrounded by a rather large grassy lawn. The lawn is surrounded by a solid block of buildings and compound wall with two rather elaborate gates opening on to the courtyard, one from the east and one from the west. There are no buildings attached to the temple and the buildings facing the temple around the courtyard consist of ordinary dwellings and one other temple to the south. It is possible that the temple was at one time surrounded by monastery buildings. If this is the case the temple was probably repaired from time to time and the monastery buildings left to crumble and eventually disappear with the disappearance of the resident monks who inhabited them at an earlier age.

The temple is a typical Nepali temple of three storied roofs surmounted by a shimmering pinnacle. The pinnacle has four small golden pinnacle spirets around one large central spire over which is a multistage golden umbrella held up by six curved supports. All three roofs of the temple are of gilded metal. There are metal faces along the edges of the lowest roof at the end of the golden ribs joining the sections of the metal roof. The corners of the roofs are gracefully turned up with a small face in bronze behind each. At each of the four corners of the lowest roof, in front of the brass face is a brass bird with a fish dangling from its beak. From the eaves of all three roofs hang a series of small bells, set a few inches apart and running right round the temple. The last gilding of the lowest roof is said to have been added by King Jaya Prakash of Kathmandu in the year 1726.[1]

[1]H.A. Oldfield, Sketches from Nipal (London,1880), ii. 265.

A long metal banner called dhvaja or patākā hangs down from the top of the pinnacle to within a few feet of the main or north entrance to the temple. The banner is composed of a series of connected, silver-coloured plates of equal width terminating in a large medallion with a golden image set in the centre. It is said by some that these temple banners represent a pathway by which the deity will descend to hear the prayers of the devotee. The end of the banner marks the lowest point to which the deity will descend.[2] However, they are probably simply votive offerings. Such is certainly the case with a similar banner donated by a group of Kathmandu Buddhists and hung for the first time on the chariot during the festival of 1972.

On the north side of the temple, beneath the second roof, is fixed an assorted array of kitchen utensils, water jugs, bells, and a crescent banner. These are mounted under the eaves as offerings from the devotees of Matsyendranath who have received some boon from the deity.[3]

The roof struts are elaborately carved with figures of many armed deities. Tree motifs are used above each strut figure to frame it on its long wooden setting. Each of the four doorways is surmounted by an elaborately carved toraṇa, the most elaborate one over the main, or north, entrance of the temple. The doorways are elaborately carved and the main doorway overlaid with intricate designs in silver. At the base of the silver door frame is an inscription written in Newari in the Nagri script describing repairs made to the temple. It front of the main doorway hangs a large oil lamp. Flanking the short stairway to each of the doorways are a pair of guardian lions,

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[2]Ronald M. Bernier, The Temples of Nepal (Kathamndu, 1970), p. 33.
[3]Ronald M. Bernier, op. cit., p. 95.

lions, all of stone except the pair in front of the main entrance which are of metal with the eyes, teeth, and toe nails coloured.

To the left of the main entrance hangs a large bell. The bell bears a Newari script legend written in mixed Sanskrit and Newari. It is dated NS 824 (1703-04) and says the bell was offered by King Yognarendra. One Bhavanisankar Malmi was in charge of making the bell. The bell is called a bell of Goddess Bhavani.[4] At the top of the bell support is another inscription commenting on repairs made to the temple by Juddha Shamsher.

Most of the temples of Nepal are built on a raised plinth of three or more stages in order to increase the impact of the temple as one approaches the temple area. The striking Taleju temple of Kathmandu, for instance, would be completely lost in the maze of surrounding buildings if it were not built up on a plinth of twelve levels. The temple of Matsyendranath merely rests on a stone platform about three feet high and twenty feet square. However, in this case the impact is not lost as the temple stands alone in the centre of the grassy courtyard and catches the eye immediately one comes into the courtyard from either of the two gates.

On top of the platform is a circumambulatory passage surrounded by a railing. Into the railing are set a series of 143 Tibetan prayer wheels, with a small lamp in front of each. The prayer wheels are evidently of recent origin. Four of the prayer wheels are set over an inscription which says, 'Installed in the Auspicious Year 1068', which corresponds to 1957-58 AD. Whether the other prayer wheels were put up at the same time is not known, but they are evidently of recent origin and set up by Tibetans. Therefore they are not directly connected with the historical cult of Matsyendranath.

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[4]Hemraj Sakya and T.R. Vaidya, Medieval Nepal (Kathmandu, 1970), p. 198.

Behind the prayer wheels is a series of 143 paintings of various forms of the Boddhisattva Aryalokitesvara. These are evidently imitations of a similar series of 108 pictures around the temple of Seto Matsyendranath in Kathmandu, described in detail by Benoytosh Bhattacharyya.[5] As Bhattacharyya says these pictures are found only in the temple of Seto Matsyendranath in Kathmandu, the series in Patan must have been set up after he published his first edition in 1924.

Immediately to the north of the temple are a number of pillar mounted sculptures in bronze which face the main entrance of the temple. They consist of an elephant, a lion, a cobra, a whale, a peacock, a statue of Garuda, and a group of five deities, each with a foot resting on its respective vehicle. The deities include: Visnu and his garuda, Ganesh and the rat, Siva and the bull Nandi, and Surya and the horse. Each of these excellently worked bronze sculptures, except the horse, bears the following inscription around the base: 'Presented in the year B.S. 1940 (1883-84 A.D.) by the Eastern Commanding General, Padma Jung Bahadur Rana, son of His Highness the Maharaja Jung Bahadur.'[6]

In addition to the inscriptions on the bell, the one beneath the main door, and the short inscription under the prayer wheels, there is a very important inscription inside the temple. The inscription is on two large stones mounted on the wall just inside the eastern door and was put up by King Srinivasa Malla on Sunday 16 February 1673.[7] This inscription, which will be referred to later in detail, deals with grants of land

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[5]Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, The Indian Buddhist Iconography 2nd ed. (Calcutta, 1968), pp. 394ff.

[6]श्री ३ महाराज जङ बहादुरका छोरो श्री पूर्व तर्फका कम्याण्डिङ जनर पद्म जङ बहादुर राणाबाट सम्वत् १९४० सालमा चढाइ वक्स्या को:

[7]Samsodhan Mandal, Abhilekh Sangraha (Kathmandu, no date) x. 7-11.

for the support of the temple and the festival, as well as the duties of various people connected with the Chariot Festival.

Directly to the south of the main temple is a large Buddhist stupa, a small stupa, and two stone, octagonal shrines with various Buddhas on the eight faces. There is another temple set into the row of buildings along the south of the courtyard.

None of the inscriptions in or around the temple indicate the date when the present temple was built. Undoubtedly there was a temple of Matsyendranath there long before the present temple was built, and the temple has been rebuilt at least twice in rather recent times. Extensive damage was caused in an earthquake in 1834, and the temple was completely leveled in the earthquake of 1934. The woodwork and metal parts were salvaged after the earthquake; and photographs taken before and after the earthquake indicate that it was rebuilt exactly as it was before. There is no way of knowing how often this has happened since the temple was constructed in the present style.

The earliest date given for the construction of the present temple is the date of 1408 given by Landon.[8] The same date is given by Bernier, but he has evidently taken it from Landon,[9] and neither he nor Landon cite their authority for the date. Most probably Landon has deduced this from the data given in Wright's chronicle. There it states that in the year 1408 there was a great earthquake and the temple of Matsyendranath, among others, was destroyed.[10] The same is given in the

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[8]Perceval Landon, Nepal (London, 1928), i. 104.
[9]Bernier, op. cit., p. 93.
[10]Daniel Wright, History of Nepal, 2nd ed. (Calcutta, 1958), p, 108.

chronicle called the Rājvamśāvalī,[11] and in the Bhāṣā Vamśāvalī.[12] It is difficult to evaluate this data as much of what the chronicles give for this early period is incorrect. There is also at the temple a badly damaged inscription of Yaksa Malla who ruled from 1428 to 1480.[13] However, very little can be inferred from this. Part of the name Aryalokitesvara is found on the inscription, but this could have been salvaged from an earlier temple. Oldfield mentions an inscription dated 1582 A.D. found over one of the windows.[14] I do not know if it is still there; and he says nothing about the content of the inscription. No more recent author has mentioned it. The inscription of Srinivasa Malla cited above gives the date of 1673 and the temple was surely in existence before his inscription was put up as repairs were made at that time. According to one of my informants in Patan the records there show the temple was built by King Siddhi Narasimha Malla, who ruled in Patan from 1620 to 1661. This would correspond to the date of B.S. 1678 (1621-22 A.D.) given by Madan Mohan Mishra in his book on Nepalese Iconography.[15] However, Mishra gives no source for the date.

There is one more structure in Patan, not at the site of the Matsyendranath temple, but in the Patan Darbar Square, which is intimately connected with Matsyendranath and his festival. To the right of the main gate of the royal palace is a raised platform under

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[11]Balchandra Sharma, ed., 'Kāthmāndū Upatyāko Ek Rājvamsāvali', Ancient Nepal, iv (July, 1968), p. 3.
[12]Deviprasād Lansal, ed., Bhāṣā Vamśāvali ii. (Kathmandu, 2023), p. 35.
[13]D.R. Regmi, Medieval Nepal (Calcutta, 1965), iii, Appendix I, p. 76, Inscription No. LXVI.
[14]Oldfield, op. cit., ii, 264.
[15]Madan Mohan Mishra, Raṣtra Mūrti Mālā -- Ek Adhyāyan (Patan, 2026), p. 40.

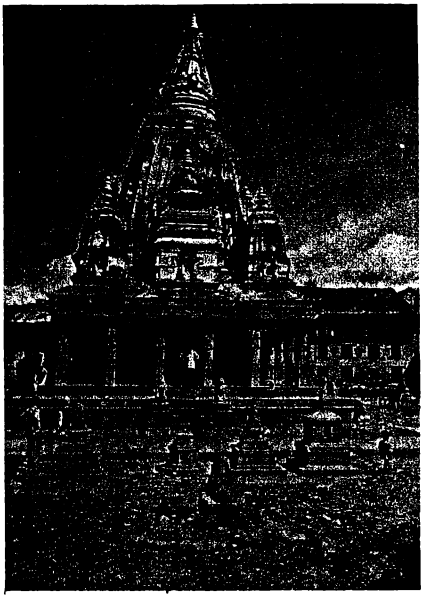
a tile roof. The platform is called manimaṇḍapa according to an inscription there and is used by the priests and astrologers to determine the auspicious days for the various functions connected with the Chariot Festival of Matsyendranath. An inscription there indicates that the maṇḍapa was to be used on the occasions when the king met with his councillors; and the maṇḍapa has a throne attached for the use of the king of Patan. It was put up under the patronage of Yognarendra Malla and is dated NS 821 (1700-01 A.D.).[16]

Once the last event of the Chariot Festival is completed in Jawalakhel and the crowd begins to disperse, Matsyendranath is carried back 'home' to Bungamati. Bungamati seems to have been the original home of Rāto Matsyendranath and to this day the Newars of Patan refer to Bungamati as Matsyendranath's maitī, an odd quirk as the term is used only of a married woman's paternal family home. We shall have occasion to return to this oddity and its significance later.

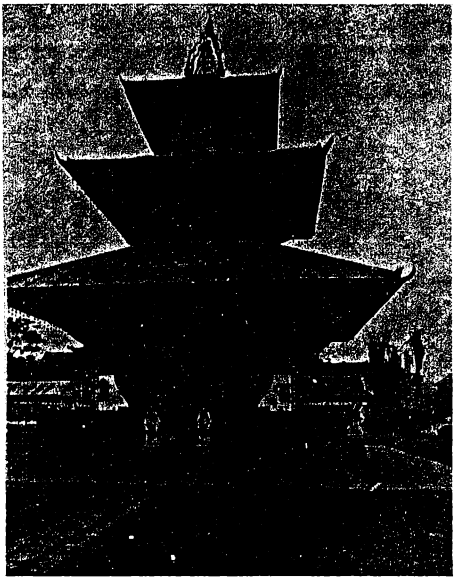
The village of Bungamati is a fair-sized Newar farming community about four miles south-west of Patan. To this day all the inhabitants of the village except one chetrī family which has recently moved into the village, are Newars; and the life and economy of the village revolve around Matsyendranath and his temple. Much of the land the people farm is gūṭhī land belonging to Matsyendranath, the social life of the village revolves round the festivals of Matsyendranath, and the village elders are the attendants of Matsyendranath.

The Bungamati temple of Matsyendranath lies at the southern end of the village and is set in an open courtyard surrounded by ordinary village houses and religious rest houses. Unlike the temple of Patan, this is not a temple of multi-storied roofs, but a śikhara

[16]Regmi, op. cit., ii. 227.



Taha Bahal--Patan
Temple of Matsyendranath



Temple of Bungadeva(Matsy-
endranath)--Bungamati

temple, built entirely of stone except for the doors and the balcony supports, which are wooden. The temple rests on a plinth of two levels, the top level being about four and a half feet above the level of the ground, and about 20 feet square. The temple has only one story and the sanctum is surrounded by a veranda about three feet wide. There are doors into the sanctum on each side, but the main door, and the only one that is opened, is the north door. Over each of the doors is a torana, none of them as elaborate as the ones in Patan. There are guardian lions flanking the steps up to each entrance, all of stone; but the pair at the main entrance are larger and more elaborate. To the left of the main entrance are two bells, one large and one small. The door of the sanctum is kept open most of the day when Matsyendranath is in residence. The sanctum is not more than twelve feet square and the idol is kept just inside the main door. The rest of the sanctum looks rather like an untidy godown with utensils and various odd bits stored in the dark interior.

The main śikhara rises to a height of about thirty feet and is surmounted by a golden pinnacle crowned with a golden umbrella which is supported by four metal supports. Around the main śikhara are grouped eight smaller śikharas, one at each corner, about six feet high and another, slightly higher, over each of the entrances. Each of the smaller śikharas is crowned with a golden pinnacle. To the south and the west of the temple are a number of small chaityas. In front and just to the left of the main entrance of the temple is a rectangular pit surrounded by votive lamps. Directly opposite this sunken pit are three empty pillars which seem to have had statues on them at one time. These stand in front of an open rest house. On the porch of the rest house is an enormous Tibetan prayer wheel, about five feet high. There are also a few other Tibetan prayer wheels set against the wall of the sanctum on the west side of the veranda. All of these are obviously recent additions. People of the village were not certain of the

date they were installed, but sure that they had been added within the last twenty years. One enters the courtyard of the temple by one of two gates at the north and south end of the courtyard. The gateway at the northern end of the courtyard opens out onto a steep stairway descending to the main part of the village. Flanking the doorway are two large stone lions facing down towards the village.

In the south-west corner of the temple courtyard is a rather recently repaired temple of Bhairava. Sacrifices are performed there every morning and the temple holds a place in the life of the village second only to that of Matsyendranath's temple.

The age of the present temple of Matsyendranath is difficult to determine. Though there are two inscriptions at the temple they do not indicate when the temple was built. The first is inside the temple itself and bears the date of 22 Oct. 1675. It relates to land grants and instructions for the festival and was put up in the time of Srinivasa Malla.[17] The second inscription, dated 27 Nov. 1680, also in the time of Srinivasa Malla, relates to repairs undertaken in that year.[18] Hence the present temple was built some time before 1675. Madan Mohan Mishra claims that the temple is a temple of the Licchavi period.[19] However, he gives no authority for this statement and everyone else consulted agrees that the present temple must have been constructed in the late Malla period, if not by Srinivasa Malla himself. As in Patan, so in Bungamati, there must have been another temple, or temples, which preceded the present structure.

Fr. Giuseppe, who lived in Patan in the last days of the Malla Kings has given a description of the temple

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[17]Regmi, op. cit., iv. 168 .
[18]Regmi, op. cit., iv. 187.
[19]Mishra, op. cit., frontispiece.

at Bungamati as he found it in his day.

> To the westward also of the great city of Lelit Pattan, at the distance of only three miles, is a castle called Banga, in which there is a magnificent temple. . . . One day, when I was at the commandant's house, he had occasion to go into the varanda, which is at the bottom of the great court facing the temple, where all the cheifs dependent upon his orders were assembled, and where also was collected the wealth of the temple; and wishing to speak with me before I went away, he called me into the varanda. Form this incident I obtained a sight of the temple, and then passed by the great court which was in front; it is entirely marble, almost blue, but interspersed with large flowers of bronze well-disposed, to form the pavement of the great courtyard, the magnificence of which astonished me; and I do not believe there is another equal to it in Europe.[20]

If this description is at all accurate, the temple has suffered greatly during the last two hundred years from neglect and pilferage, as it possesses none of this magnificence today.

Before leaving this chapter on the temples of Matsyendranath, a few words must be said about the special temple attendants of Matsyendranath, the Pāñjus who reside in Bungamati. In his treatment of the Matsyendranath Festival Dr. Regmi has a few passing references to the Pāñjus. I have found no other author who has so much as even mentioned them, and no one has attempted to explain their position and functions. This

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[20]Fr. Giuseppe, 'Account of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1767-1771', trans. John Shore, Asiatick Researches, ii (1801), p. 312-313.

I suspect is due to the fact that those who have written about Matsyendranath and conducted research into the festival have confined their investigations to Patan. However, the Pāñjus have a very important part to play in the ritual surrounding Matsyendranath, and no treatment of the cult of Matsyendranath would be complete without attempting at least a preliminary survey of their role.[21]

There are thirty-one Pāñjus, all resident in Bungamati. Though one of the Pāñjus has recently taken up residence in Patan, he returns to Bungamati regularly to carry out his duties at the temple. Seven of the Pāñjus are Gubājus, i.e. Vajracharyas, the remaining twenty-four are Śākyas. The number and the proportion are fixed and have remained so for as long as people can remember. When a Gubāju Pāñju dies his place must be taken by a new Gubāju Pañju, and the same for the Śākyas. Some of my informants told me that the new Pāñju must be the son of a Pāñju; others denied this and asserted that the only requirement is that he be of the proper caste. However on closer questioning these latter could not cite an instance of a new Pāñju being selected whose father had not been a Pāñju before him. All agreed that the man selected had to be a permanent Bungamati resident, though he might take up temporary residence outside.

At present a new Pāñju is selected in the following way. When a Pāñju dies, the Gūthi adda prepares a tourna of three or four names which is then presented to the Lok Seva Bibhāg, a branch of the government civil service. They then select the most suitable man from the

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[21]For the information on the Pāñjus I am indebted to Mr. Stephen Greenwold who has completed ten months of research in Bungamati in preparation for his doctorate in Anthropology, to Shri Asha Kaji Bajracharya of Patan, Shri Madan Mohan Mishra, and one of the Pāñjus of Bungamati.

list and he takes up the office of Pāñju for life. One of the Pāñju informed me that at the present time the position is actually auctioned off. Those whose names have been proposed, bid for the office and it goes to the highest bidder, the amount reaching as high as Rs. 6,000. At present his family is saving money to enable his son to make a successful bid for the office when a vacancy occurs. The money is given to the Matsyendranath Gūṭhī by the man who wins the auction and is not returned.

The newly appointed Pāñju is put through a special initiation ceremony (díksā) and once he has been initiated a certain standard of conduct is expected of him. He must be able to get on amicably with the other Pāñjus, he must take up his religious duties on the appointed day and remain faithful to them throughout his term of service. Once he has been initiated into the order he is not allowed to eat rice in the houses of any but Vajrachārya or Śākya families. He is not allowed the use of tobacco at any time. He must purchase two sets of vestments for use in the temple. These consist principally of a long white robe for use in the temple at Bungamati and at Patan, and a red outfit for use during the Chariot Festival. He must buy a new outfit every fifteen years; and when a Pāñju dies his entire outfit is given to the family priest (a Gubāju). The new Pāñju who takes his place is not allowed to buy these back from the family priest but must have his own made.

The principal duty of the Pāñju is temple service. There is one Pāñju on duty at all times at the temple where Matsyendranath is residing, either in Bungamati or in Patan. Pāñjus are assigned to temple service for a period of fifteen days turn by turn. Hence one's turn comes round only once every eighteen months or so. When one's time approaches he must shave his head and appear at the temple at the appointed time to take over his duties. At the present an officer of the government Gūthī Corporation comes to the temple on the day of the

change-over to take an inventory of the accessories in the temple and the considerable treasure which belongs to Matsyendranath. When the inventory is completed the charge is handed over to the new man; and until the end of his fifteen day period he is responsible for temple services and the safeguarding of Matsyendranath's treasure. The precaution of the inventory by the corporation official seems to be a rather recent innovation and necessitated by the fact that certain pictures, banners, and other items of Matsyendranath's treasure were being periodically 'lost'. When the loss was discovered the Pāñju on duty was always sure that the loss had not taken place during his term.

During his period of service the Pāñju must stay at the temple. He is allowed to eat only one meal during a given twenty-four hour period, and is not allowed to eat any meat or to take any liquor during his term of service. At other times there are no restrictions on the consumption of meat or liquor. Each day the Pāñju must bathe three times and perform pūjā at 5:00 A.M., 12:00 Noon, and 7:00 P.M. At other times of the day he is to be on duty to guard the temple and assist worshippers in lighting lamps, burning incense, etc. The more important pūjās are performed at stated times during the year by the Gubāju priests, but the daily round of services can be conducted by the Śākya Pañjus. While Matsyendranath is in residence at Taha Bahal in Patan, the Pāñjus from Bungamati go turn by turn to Patan to perform their duties.

When it is time to take Matsyendranath to Patan he is carried on a portable shrine by the Pāñjus.

During the Chariot Festival the Pāñjus have further duties. Four days befor the Bathing Ceremony in Lagankhel, some of the Panjus come to Patan in pairs and go from ṭol to ṭol in Patan to collect offerings for the ceremonies of the bathing rite. They collect the offerings from all but

those castes from whose hands one is not allowed to take water. The actual ceremonies connected with the bathing ritual and the adornment of the image which follow it, however, are not done by the Pāñjus but by the Nikhus and the Bāñḍās of Patan.

When the image is placed on the chariot in Pulchowk for the beginning of the Chariot Festival two Pāñjus come from Bungamati and take their place on the chariot for the duration of the festival. Two are appointed each year and these same two serve throughout the festival. Hence one's turn to ride the chariot comes only once every fifteen years. The two Pāñjus spend the entire day on the chariot, even sleeping there at night. They are permitted to leave the chariot each day for a short period between noon and 4:00 P.M.

On the last day of the festivities the wives of fifteen or sixteen Pāñjus take part in a special ceremony which will be described in the next chapter. Half of the wives come at a time on alternate years.

When the festivities are over the image is removed from the chariot and carried back to Bungamati in the portable shrine by eight Pāñjus. This office is also carried out in rotation.

All of the offerings made during the Chariot Festival are given to the two Pāñjus in attendance on the chariot. However, when they return to Bungamati they must use some of these offerings to perform an elaborate pūjā at the Bhairava temple in Bungamati. After this they have to treat the whole village to a feast. The time of the feast is selected with great care by the astrologers, but it is usually held within a month after the end of the Chariot Festival.

During the time of the Chariot Festival the Bāñḍās from the various tols of Patan come to the chariot to perform pūjās, but they act only in the name of the people

of their own tol, and they never serve on the chariot itself. This is reserved for the Pāñjus from Bungamati.

The duties of the Pāñjus as outlined here are not very onerous, and one may have nothing to do for nearly a year and a half. Yet their position in the social, religious, and economic life of Bungamati is paramount; and their services assure the continuity of the cult of Matsyendranath. When they are not on duty at the temple, they are free to pursue other occupations. Many of them, especially the Śakyas, engage in farming, or act as masons and carpenters in and around Bungamati. The Gubāju Pāñjus often act as family priests for various families in Bungamati.

Two of the Panjus in attendance on the image of Matsyendranath. The picture was taken one year when the chariot had been so badly damaged that the image had to be removed and set up in a nearby house while repairs were being made.

Chapter Two

The Chariot Festival of Rāto Matsyendranath

This chapter will outline the principal events of the annual Rāto Matsyendranath Festival as it is celebrated in Patan today. For the description of the festival as currently observed I have relied primarily on the account given by Dr. Regmi (Medieval Nepal, Vol. I and II, passim), Gopal Singh Nepali's account in The Newars (p. 369-375), and on further data supplied by those in Patan who are connected with the annual festival.

After the completion of the Chariot Festival each year Matsyendranath returns to his temple in Bungamati and there he resides until sometime in the late fall or early winter.[1] According to one Vaṃśāvalī Matsyendranath is to reside in Bungamati, south of the Nakhu River, as long as the sun continues its southward Journey.[2] At the time of the winter solstice he is then brought north of the river to his temple in Patan where he must reside as long as the sun continues its northward journey. This does not correspond exactly to what is done at the present time as the Chariot Festival usually ends the first week in June, so he returns before the summer solstice and is brought back to Patan as early as the last week in November or as late as February. Therefore he often resides longer at Bungamati than at Patan. The discrepancy was explained by saying that what is required is that he be moved about the time of the solstice. The exact, propitious date for the move must be determined each year by the astrologers. One informant in Patan told me that the dual residence was merely a practical measure. Originally there was one temple, in Bungamati; the chariot was constructed there and drawn to Patan and back

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[1]Regmi, op. cit., ii. 653

[2]Balchandra Sharma, ed., 'Kāthmandū Upatyāko Ek Rājvamsāvali', Ancient Nepal, iv (July 1968), 12.

each year for the first few years. However, it was soon realized that this was an impractical arrangement. The road to Bungamati, even to this day, is not a practical route for the huge, lumbering vehicle. Furthermore, by the time the festival is finished the rains have started and it proved to be an almost impossible feat to get the chariot back to Bungamati across the Nakhu river, which had no bridge at that time. One year the rains were especially heavy and it was impossible to take Matsyendranath back to Bungamati in his chariot, so it was decided to keep him in the Dharma Kīrti Mahāvihāra until the rains subsided.

Finally the six month arrangement was hit on. The Chariot Festival would begin from Patan so there was no need to bring the chariot from Bungamati; and the festival was officially terminated at Jawalakhel so that there was no need to drag the chariot back to Bungamati. Matsyendranath could be carried back in a portable shrine. There are as far as I know, no historical documents or inscriptions to verify this story, but it is plausible. Furthermore, every twelve years the chariot is still constructed in Bungamati and dragged the entire distance to Patan and back. According to the above theory this is done in memory of the original festival. The thyāsaphu E describes how the chariot was pulled from Bungamati and back again in the year NS 804.[3] This is surely an instance of the twelve year festival.

Except for every twelfth year then, Matsyendranath is brought to Patan from Bungamati, some time in the fall or winter, on a portable shrine carried by the Pāñjus. When he is moved his entire treasure, consisting of one metal strongbox and several other boxes, accompanies him. He continues to reside in the temple at Taha Bahal until it is time for the first rites of

[3]Regmi, op- cit., ii. 305.

the Chariot Festival.

The Chariot Festival usually lasts about two months in all and can be conveniently divided into three stages: 1) The bathing and initiation ceremonies, 2) The Chariot Festival proper, 3) The Festival of the showing of the bhoṭo.

The Bathing Ceremony takes place on Baiśākh Kriṣhṇa Pratipadā, the first day of the dark fortnight in the month of Baisakh which usually falls toward the end of March. It is called bugañhwañ in Newari. Four days before this time the Pāñjus come to Patan to collect the offerings for the ceremonies. This is the only function they have to perform during this part of the festival.

On the appointed day the image is carried from the temple in Patan by a group called the Nikhūs and set up on a short stone maṇḍal under a tree in Lagankhel. According to tradition this is the very tree where King Narendra Deva halted when he brought Matsyendranath to the Valley.[4]

Four thrones or pedestals are set up near the maṇḍal. On these pedestals are set tīrtha jal (sacred water) and the panchamrit: milk, ghee, maha, raw sugar, and curd. At the auspiscious moment determined by the astrologers, one of the Nikhūs pours water over the idol from a conch shell. There follows a blessing of the idol with each of the five sacred substances mentioned above. According to Oldfield the bathing is performed by the Nikhūs, not by a bāñḍā.[5] My informants in Patan have confirmed that this is still the case.

After the Bathing Ceremony has been completed the image is covered with white and yellow cloths as no one is allowed to look on the image until it has been

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[4]Gopal Singh Nepali, The Newars (Bombay, 1965), p. 370
[5]Oldfield, op. cit., ii. 328.

properly decorated and the initiation ceremonies performed.[6] The image is then placed again on the portable shrine and carried back to Taha Bahal by the Nikhūs.

During the ceremonies in Lagankhel and the procession back to the temple, a group of jogīs come to play the conch and other instruments throughout the ceremony. When they have finished their duties they have a feast on khīr. I was not able to determine whether or not these are the Kanphāṭṭā yogīs referred to by Dr. Regmi[7] as my informants insisted that there are no kanphāṭṭā yogīs in Patan at the present time.

During the ceremonies in Lagankhel a sword is presented to Matsyendranath and carried at the head of the procession back to Patan.[8] The sword is brought under a ceremonial umbrella and accompanied by two attendants carrying torches and a third attendant carrying a staff. This group is escorted by the guard of the rāj guru dressed in blue uniforms.

This ceremony of the presentation of the sword is repeated before each major event of the festival, i.e. before the chariot is drawn from place to place, before the ceremony for the wives of the pāñjus, and before the showing of the bhoṭo. All informants agree that the sword represents the king, but there is no agreement about which king it represents. Some say that it is the sword of the current King of Nepal, and represents his presence at the festival. Some say that it is the sword of the King of Bhaktapur and that it represents King Narendra Dev who brought Matsyendranath to Nepal and whose capital was in Bhaktapur. Others say that it is the sword of King Sri Nivasa Malla of Patan, who was a

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[6]This information I received from an informant in Patan who assists at the daśa karma ceremonies.
[7]Regmi, op. cit., ii. 757.
[8]Sylvain Levi, Le Nepal (Paris, 1905), ii. 45 .

great devotee and who set up the important inscription in the temple. To this day when the sword arrives people say, "Sri Nivasa has come." That it does indeed represent the Malla King of Patan would seem to be the most likely explanation, as historical records indicate that at least some of the kings of Patan attended every event of the festival. Not all of the kings would have been so inclined or have had the time to do so. The sword would represent them. Once the whole Valley came under the rule of the Shah Kings, it would be natural that people would look upon the sword as representing the current king, though the festival itself is not one that the present dynasty has taken special interest in.

Upon arrival in Taha Bahal the image is shut up in a small chamber for ten days during which time it is cleaned, replastered, and painted by the Nikhūs.[9] According to tradition thirty-two different kinds of clay must be brought from a place called Mhyapī for the replastering and painting. Clay is still brought from this place, but they are no longer able to bring the thirty-two kinds.[10]

According to a tradition recounted by Dr. Regmi, when the image is removed from the temple for bathing, the deity leaves the image and takes up residence inside a kalaśa which is left in the customary place in the sanctum of the temple. This transfer is effected by incantations and the deity remains there until the image is brought out on a portable shrine to be put on the chariot.[11] More probably this should be, until it is handed over to the bāñdās, as the deity is certainly considered to be present during the ceremonies at Taha Bahal which take place before the image is placed in the

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[9]Oldfield, op. cit., ii. 329.

[10]This information is from the above mentioned informant in Patan.

[11]Regmi, op. cit., ii. 653.

chariot. The period would then correspond perfectly with the period that the image is under the care of the Nikhūs.

On the eighth day of the dark fortnight, when the decorations have been completed, the image is brought out into the sun by the Nikhūs and handed over to the bāñḍās of Patan who are in charge of the ceremonies which follow. The duties of the Nikhūs are finished once they hand over the image to the bāñḍās. Henceforth all ceremonies are conducted by the bāñḍas of Patan and the Pāñjus. The Nikhūs are not allowed to touch the image once their decorations are finished.

The position of the Nikhūs in regard to the festival is rather an interesting one. Oldfield has this to say about them:

> These Nikus were originally genuine Buddhists, and it was their hereditary calling to clean, bathe, and paint the image of the deity. They have long since become Hindus, but they still practise their hereditary calling with reference to the deity.[12]

Briggs, in his treatment of Gorakhnath and Matsyendranath insists that they are Saivites.[13] Levi and others list them as painters or chitrakārs by caste.[14] Dr. Regmi has the following to say:

> They paint the image of Red Machchhindra (Lokesvara) in Patan. . . . They have Brahman priests, but some families have Guva priests.[15]

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[12]Oldfield, op. cit., ii. 329.
[13]G.W. Briggs, Gorakhnath and the Kanphatta Yogis (Calcutta, 1958) p. 145.
[14]Levi, op. cit., i. 239.
[15]Regmi, op. cit., i. 668.

Informants in Patan say that they were once Brahmans but, for some reason or other, lost their caste and are now recognised as Shrestha Newars, who have taken up the work of religious painters. If this is so, they are indeed Hindus, and it is interesting to note that the only contact they have with the image is at a time when the god is supposed to have left the image. They are the only non-Buddhist, non-bāñḍā group to deal directly with the care and handling of the image.

On the twelfth or thirteenth of the fortnight the bāñḍās perform the daśa karma, the principal life cycle ceremonies as undergone by an uppercaste Newar. The ceremonies performed are not only those performed for a male Newar, but include the female ceremonies such as the Yihee and the Barha as well.[16] Dr. Regmi says that these are the kriyas performed by stages in the initiation of a mendicant.[17] However, this is contradicted by Gopal Singh Nepali and the informants in Patan.

Meanwhile over in Pulchowk on the road between the Fire Brigade and the Western Asoka Stupa the chariot is being prepared. The wheels, the main beams, and the shrine itself have been preserved from the previous year. These must be assembled and the other requirements gathered. The chariot consists of a heavy wooden platform on which is set a square wooden shrine, covered with plates of copper gilt, in which the image is to be set. The shrine stands in the centre of the platform and is six or seven feet high. On the back of the toraṇa which is placed over the main doorway of the shrine is an inscription in Newari script dated NS 866 (1745-46 AD). The inscription is in mixed Sanskrit and Newari and indicates that the metal sides of the shrine were offered by King Rajyaprakash Malla.[18]

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[16]Nepali, op. cit., i. 668.
[17]Regmi, op. cit., ii. 653.
[18]Hemraj Sakya and T.R. Vaidya, Medieval Nepal (Kathmandu, 1970), p. 225-26.

Around the shrine there is a sort of balcony providing enough room for the attendant priest to move around.

Above the chamber rises a gigantic spire of green boughs, poles, and streamers held together by vines, ropes and cane. Above this, at a height of about 50 feet rests a copper disk representing a lotus. On this is placed an image of Amitabha and one of the guru of Matsyendranath, Vajrasattva, brought from Kwa Bahal where he is locally known as Vajradhar. Above this is an ornamental umbrella and a flag. From the top hang symbols of the moon and sun.

The various parts of the chariot are personified to represent various deities. The four large wheels, about six feet in diameter, are each painted with three eyes. These represent four Bhairavas from four different places in the Valley. Their names are: Harisiddhi, Hayagriva (of Bungamati), Lubtasanhara (or Lutabaha), and Nandakunda (or Lhonde Konde).[19] The main beam of the chariot which rests on the two axles, extends several feet in front and back of the chariot. The front of the beam is turned up and ends in a face which represents Karkotaka Nagraja. The four streamers which hang down from the top of the spire represent nāgas, as do also the pulling ropes which are attached to the front of the chariot. Underneath the platform the god Chaksukamuni is said to reside. He is identified by some with Kubera, and from time to time liquor and sacrifices must be offered to him. On the platform of the chariot immediately behind the image of Matsyendranath is placed an image of Padmapani Boddhisattva. I was informed that he was put there as the bodyguard of Matsyendranath, however it is also true that Matsyendranath himself is looked on as a form of Padmapani. The following images

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[19]Regmi, op. cit., ii. 616. Cf. also Asha Kaji Bajracharya, Buñgadyo Nepāle Hugu Khan, 2nd ed. (Patan, 2024), p. 61.

are also placed on the chariot: a horse (as symbol of Surya), a bull (symbol of Siva), a Garuda (symbol of Visnu), and a swan (symbol of Brahma).

Various people are involved in the preparation and care of the chariot itself. As near as can be determined the following five are the most important groups:

1. The Baḍhaīs--these are a group of twenty-four carpenters, by caste Jyapus, who are assigned to provide the necessary lumber for the construction of the chariot and to do the carpentry work. A contract is let each year for this by the Gūṭhi Sansthān, but the carpenters are always drawn from the same clan of Jyapus.

2. The Yañwañs--these are also drawn from a clan of Jyapus assigned to provide the ropes, vines, and cane needed for assembling the spire. Thirty are appointed each year and they are given a special initiation known as mahankāl dīkśā. They alone are allowed to climb to the top of the chariot spire to assemble it and to make any necessary repairs during the festival.

3. The Ghakūs--the Ghakūs are the attendants of the wheels and the brakemen. Twelve are assigned each year, and it is their task to protect the wheels, prevent them from dashing against building, etc., and to stop the vehicle when it arrives at a halting place. They are given a Bhairava dīkśā.

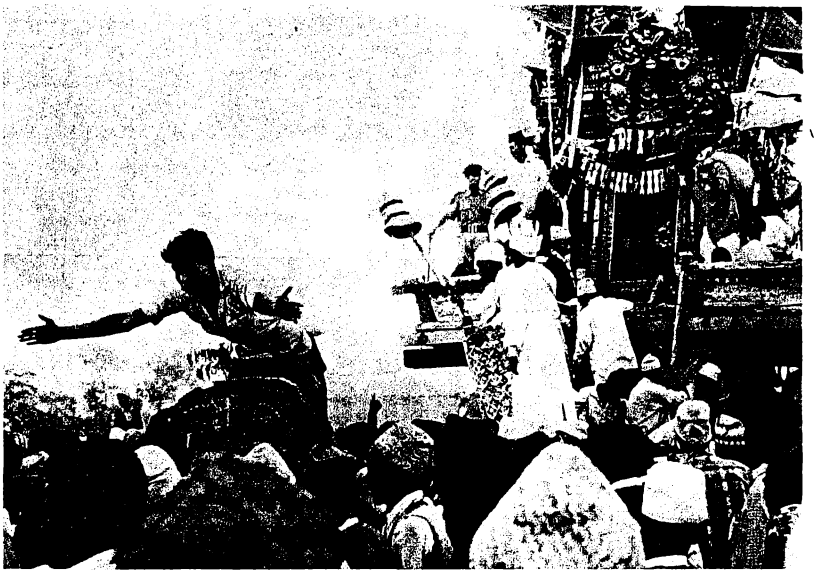
4. Sese Brahmans--ten brahmans are appointed to serve by turn as the 'starters' of the vehicle. When the appointed one shouts sese the chariot moves and not before. They are Newar Brahmans, descendants of the Brahman priests to the Malla Kings of Patan. During the festival they dress in white and wear red sashes. Two of them by turns each year take their place on the main beam of the chariot just in front of the door of the sanctum. They also perform a pūjā during the festival on an appointed date.

5. Jaṅgal tāne-- the rope pullers. In former times a group of people made up of members of various castes, plus some officials from the Gūṭhi Sansthān, were assigned as the pullers of the chariot. At present the chariot is pulled mainly by the Jyapus of the area to which the chariot is being pulled, though anyone may join in, and large numbers of outsiders join when the chariot is pulled to Jawalakhel. One of the Jyapus is assigned each day to direct the pulling of the chariot. He stands or sits on the main beam just behind the face of Karkotaka Nagraj and at the signal from the Brahmans he directs the crowd of pullers. This requires no little skill as the huge vehicle is steered by the crowd pulling harder on one or other side, and steady control is required to prevent the chariot from tipping over when it starts and stops, or when it has to negotiate over the rutted and rocky back lanes of Patan.

Certain restrictions are laid upon all of the above mentioned 'officials'. For example, from the day of the Bathing Ceremony in Lagankhel until the end of the Bhoṭo Festival in Jawalakhel they are not permitted to eat outside of their own homes. All of the people thus appointed receive a daily wage from the Gūthi fund for the duration of the festival.

On Baiśākh Śukla Pratipadā , the first day of the bright fortnight of the month of Baisakh, at the auspicious moment determined by the astrologers, the bāñḍās take Matsyendranath from his temple in Taha Bahal, place him on the portable shrine and carry him to the waiting chariot in Pulchowk. In 1971 this took place on 26th April and in 1972 on 14th April. Originally the idol was kept in a nearby rest house until it was time for the chariot to move on the fourth day; but nowadays the image is immediately placed in the chariot amidst the chanting of mantras and the playing of instruments. The chariot remains in Pulchowk for three days during which time people come from the surrounding areas to make offerings as a propitiation for their sins. The offerings

The Jyapu "conductor" directing the pulling of the chariot with the two "Sese Brahmans"directly behind him



are, according to a long standing tradition, taken by the descendants of one Sunya Shri Mishra from Em Pi Bahal. This was originally a Brahman family in the service of the Malla Kings, but now goes by the name of Vajramishra.

At this time, and during the ceremonies which follow along the route, the people originally offered khīr, rice cooked in milk. But this custom has been abandoned and now they offer uncooked rice. I was given two explanations for this. Some say the practice was changed for purely practical reasons. The number of people increased, and there was a problem of getting sufficient milk; hence they changed from khīr to ordinary cooked rice. As the numbers further increased it become impractical to offer so much cooked rice, and uncooked rice was offered. The other explanation is that after the time of Jayastithi Malla people became more caste conscious. As people of all castes came to make offerings, and the priests refused to accept cooked rice from people of the lower castes, they hit on the expediency of offering uncooked rice.[20] Both explanations are plausable, and perhaps both reasons were ultimately responsible for the change.

According to Dr. Regmi the last day before the chariot moves is observed as a special day of celebration heralding the advent of summer. The day is known as aksāya tritya and marks the day when the Newārs begin the annual pūjā of their family deity (diwalī).[21]

The chariot makes its first move on the fourth day, which in 1971 occured on 29th April. This seems to be the ordinary day for the first movement of the chariot, but it seems that all of these various days may be changed slightly if the usual day is declared unauspicious.

The first official halt of the chariot is in Gaha Bahāl. Often though, it is not pulled the entire

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[20]The information was supplied by the above mentioned informant in Patan

[21]Regmi, op. cit., ii. 54-55

distance on this fourth day. Ordinarily it remains one day at Gaha Bahāl and the people from the surrounding ṭols come to make their offerings to the deity. Different offerings are made, but principally rice. Matsyendranath is the provider of the rain which makes the rice grow, and the people show their dependence on him and their devotion to him by offering back to him some of his boon.

Next the chariot makes its way to the Sundhara area east of Patan Darbar. The festival of offerings which takes place at Sundhara is called Degu Jātra. A large crowd mills round the chariot and group after group of Jyapus from the surrounding ṭols arrive throughout the day. The constant music of their flutes, the beating of the drums, and the young dancers all contribute to the marvelous carnival atmosphere. Each group has its own musicians, its own dancers, and several large trays of offerings. They circle once round the two chariots, deposit their offerings, and then pay a devotional visit to a Buddhist shrine next to Sundhara.

From Sundhara the chariot turns to the south and Maha Bouddha temple, and from there makes its way to Chuka Bahāl. Each of these short movements is made in stages on different days, and at each place offerings are made as above. However the program is often interrupted by breakdowns. In 1970 the chariot dashed against a building and toppled over. The accident caused considerable damage to the chariot and to the houses; and it was some two weeks before the damages were repaired and the chariot was able to move again. These delays do not seem to disrupt the final programs, as the chariot remains in Lagankhel nearly a month, if it arrives on time without any mishaps. The month's leeway leaves time enough for any delays.

Finally the chariot is moved with great ceremony to Lagankhel. This last stage of the journey is the most important part of the procession and in former days was

always attended by the royal family and the Rana Prime Minister. In the days of the Mallas, the King of Patan, often accompanied by the Kings of Kathmandu and Bhaktapur joined the procession on foot during this stage of the journey.

Upon arrival at the tree of King Narendra in Lagankhel the chariot is pulled round the tree once before it comes to rest. The tree is considered to be the mother of Matsyendranath, or alternately, as harbouring his mother. He goes round the tree as a mark of respect. The small open shrine near the tree is called dolan maju.[22]

On the following day a goat is sacrificed and the blood put on the wheels of the chariot. There seems to be some disagreement about the meaning of this sacrifice; but all seem agreed that the sacrifice is not made to Matsyendranath, as bloody sacrifices are never offered to him. Some say that the sacrifice is offered to propitiate the Bhairabs.[23] Others claim it is done to propitiate, or scare away, the demons who had come with Matsyendranath's mother.

After this sacrifice the chariot is drawn twice more round the tree of Matsyendranath's mother and comes to rest about a hundred yards away at Pode Tol, where it remains until the final journey to Jawalakhel.

The day after the arrival at Pode Tol, is the Lagankhel Festival. Again a carnival atmosphere prevails as Jyapus from all the southern tols of Patan come to make their offerings. They arrive in the morning and, after making their offerings, they have a feast on the grassy slopes around Lagankhel. By mid afternoon, they re-group and make their way back to Patan, tol by tol, each group playing their flutes and

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[22]Regmi, op. cit., ii. 54-55.
[23]Regmi, op. cit., ii. 724.

dancing as they come past the two chariots and the rest house where the Patan Kumari has been sitting most of the day. Shortly after the last group has faded into the crowd, there is new excitement. A huge crowd begins to gather round the chariot for the dropping of the coconut. A man climbs to the top of the chariot spire and a hush falls over the crowd. He has something in his hands and goes from one side to the other making as though he would drop it. He continues to tease the crowd by dropping flowers, sweatmeats, banners; and finally, almost catching them off guard, he drops a coconut.

There is a mad scramble for the coconut as it is commonly believed that whoever catches the coconut will be favoured with the birth of a son within the year, if he does not have one. It is the men, not the women who catch the coconut, and they must return it after they have caught it. Gopal Singh Nepali says that the coconut is dropped by a bāñḍā.[24] However, the Pañjus say that it is dropped by an official from the Guthi Sansthan. I was not able to discover the reason for this descrepancy or why the custom has been changed, if indeed it has.

Actually the dropping of the coconut is but one part of a ceremony of scattering eight auspicious signs (aṣṭha maṅgala) as a thanksgiving for the successful progress of the Chariot Festival thus far. The other items offered are: parched rice, flowers, red powder, two types of sweets made from rice flour, and money.

One of the informants in Patan says that in Lagankhel a time is set aside when the women must pull the chariot a short distance, about twenty paces. Others agreed that this was done in the past; but the custom has nearly died out now, though a few women still participate in the pulling at Lagankhel. No explanation for the custom was offered other than that everyone

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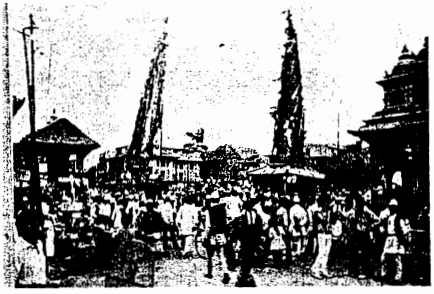
[24]Nepali, op. cit., p. 320



Scenes from the Sundhara Mela

should have the opportunity to share the honour of pulling the chariot, and a time was set aside for the women so that they would not have to be jostled in the usual crowd.

Eight days after the Lagankhel Festival there is a diwālī pūjā for Matsyendranath at Punchali ṭol. Eight days aten four astrologers assemble at the maṇḍap in Patan Darbar to determine the auspicious moment for the journey to Jawalakhel and the festival of the showing of the bhoṭo. This usually takes place a week to two weeks later.

When the auspicious day arrives the astrologers come to Poḍe ṭol with their water clock to calculate the exact moment for the movement of the chariot. At the exact moment a string of five different coloured strands is attached to the front of the chariot. Then there is a scramble while as many people as possible try to grab hold of the string. They pull until the string is broken and them scramble for souvenir bits of the string. This mock 'pulling of the chariot' satisfies the rubric stating that it must be pulled at the exact auspicious moment. The five strands are said to represent the five Dhyani Buddhas. Later in the afternoon the crowd gathers and the Jyapus pull Matsyendranath on to Jawalakhel, the last journey of the festival. The Patan Kumari is enthroned in a rest house about half way to Jawalakhel and the chariot makes one brief stop there on its way. Once the chariot reaches Jawalakhel it is dragged onto the open field in front of the zoo where it will remain for the next three days.

The day after the chariot arrives at Jawalakhel people from Jawalakhel and the Pulchowk area come to make their offerings. On the following day people come from the 'seven villages'. These include Pulchowk, Kirtipur, Panga, Bhaubahal, Bhaktapur, Thimi, and Naro-Bhare (a double village near Thimi). Throughout the day people come from different parts of the Valley and the

last two nights there are large crowds coming to make offerings, burn lights and chant the scriptures. A group also comes, morning and evening, to chant the mṛidaṅga-bājā bhajan (also called achanda bhajan). A guthi was set up for this by Srinivasa Malla and it is never omitted.

On the morning of the last day there is a pūjā to the goddess Ajima who is also said to reside under the chariot. It is said that whoever is the first to offer her pūjā on this last morning will have good luck in his trade with Tibet in the year to come. In former times many Patan merchants were engaged in trade with Tibet, but the number today must indeed be few.

On the last night a few elderly people can be seen stretched out on the lawn under a sort of make-shift tent, covered with a white sheet and with small clay lamps placed on their head, chest, knees and abdomen. They lie thus perfectly still for two hours or more as the lamps burn to signify their devotion. A few others can be seen doing pūjā before large ceremonial braziers. Many family groups light a series of 108 lamps and remain tending them until the last one has burned itself out.

Late on the last night when the 'seven villages' have finished their pūjā, and the last of the lamps have died out there takes place a curious ceremony. In the north-eastern corner of the field is a long shed used during the year for storing the wheels and other parts of the chariot. Fifteen or sixteen of the wives of the Pāñjus are assembled in this shed, all dressed in red saris. One by one they are given a blessing by a gubaju and then proceed from the shed up to the chariot where they offer pūjā and are sprinkled with water and rice grains by the pañjū. They are then led back one by one with hands clapsed, eyes down-cast and trembling, to an open space on the grass that has been cleared for them. As they come down from the chariot they are

seated in a row and people form a line to come up and place food before them. They continue to sit there, shaking, until all those who want have made their offerings. Then they are led away with their presents. The ceremony is called in Newari panjyunaki kaigu. It is obviously a Tantric ritual, and much more research would have to be done to determine its origin and true meaning. Some informants say the ceremony is performed to scare away the demons (rākśas) who had come with the mother of Matsyendranath. For this the power of women is required and they dress in red because the demons are also red. Others told me that this is actually a dīkśā ceremony which was performed on this night once by necessity and then continued by custom. On the last night, according to this theory, the Pāñjus must assist with their wives. On a certain year one of the Pāñjus' wives had just died, and it was necessary to initiate another woman for him, in order to proceed with the ceremonies. After this the custom of reinitiating all of them each year on this night was established.

On the following morning the whole grassy area in front of the zoo assumes the air of a carnival. Shopkeepers set up tea stalls wherever they can under hastily constructed shelters or tents, and a continuous stream of people moves toward Jawalakhel. By early afternoon a considerable crowd has gathered and the Kumari goddess from Kumari Bahal (or Ratnakar Mahāvihāra) in Patan arrives with her attendants. She is enthroned in a dharmaśāla in front of the chariot and to the side of the shelter, which by this time is being cleared of the singers and prepared for the King, the Royal Family, and the Ministers.[25] A new feature of the festival is the crowd of foreigners, tourists and residents of Kathmandu, who are perched in another little dharmaśāla next to the Kumari with their cameras and tape recorders. A camera seems to be the only pass required for these box seats.

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25 Gopal Singh Nepali erroneously states that the Kumari in attendance is the Kumari of Indra Jatra from Kathmandu, cf. The Newars, p. 373.

Finally about four o'clock the crowd is pushed back from around the chariot and final preparations are made for the arrival of the King. By this time the crowd has filled every available space and spilled over into the side streets. The blue clad guard of honour of the rāj guru arrive to escort the sword. They go round the chariot once, fire a salute and the sword is carried up to present it to the deity. Next a group of some seven or eight porters come up carrying several large chests. They too go once round the chariot and retire to the side to wait. The boxes they carry contain the treasure of Machendranath which will accompany him back to Bungamati after the ceremonies are finished.

The crowd now settles back to await the arrival of the King. With His Majesty's arrival the final ceremony begins. The national anthem is played and His Majesty takes his place with the Ministers and the Commander-in-Chief of the army. The Pāñjus then take the bhoṭo from inside the sanctum where it is kept next to the image, and present it to an official of the Gūṭhi Sansthān.[26] He exhibits it to the crowd from each of the four sides of the platform around the shrine, and everyone pays their respects. Once this is completed His Majesty goes up to each of the two chariots and throws a handful of coins up to the deity. With this the ceremony ends, His Majesty takes his leave and the crowd begins to disperse.

Eight Pāñjus from Bungamati then come up with the portable shrine. Another pāñju is led up into the sanctum and emerges a few moments later with a silver box, about the size of a cigar box, tied with a cloth to the top of his head. The box is said to contain either the feet of Matsyendranath, which are made of precious

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[26] This is contrary to what Gopal Singh Nepali says (op. cit., p. 374). He says the bhoṭo is shown by a bāñḍā. Perhaps there has been a recent change in the custom.

Pulling the chariot from
Lagan to Jawalakhel

Devotees burning lamps and sacrificial fires in honour of the deity the night before the showing of the bhoṭo

Groups come morning and evening to chant

metal and may be damaged on the way, or three emblems representing King Narendra Dev, Bhandudatt, and Lalita Jyapu who first brought Matsyendranath to Nepal according to the legends. This pāñju accompanies the procession back to Bungamati. Matsyendranath is then put onto the shrine, salutes are fired, and the procession back to Bungamati begins accompanied by a large crowd of torch bearers and musicians. Upon arrival in Bungamati Matsyendranath is put back into his temple after purification rites have been performed.

Back at Jawalakhel the same groups of people who were assigned to assemble and prepare the chariot begin to dismantle it immediately. Many people stay around until the large copper lotus and the cane basket which surrounds it is dropped by the workmen. If it falls face down this is a good omen indicating abundant rainfall and a good harvest. Within three days the entire massive structure has been taken apart. The branches, vines, and cane which cannot be used again are divided up among the workers and taken home. The wheels and the main beam are stored in a shed in front of the zoo at Jawalakhel. The more valuable acoutrements are taken to Taha Bahal for safekeeping.

Four days later there is a day long festival at Bungamati when hundreds of people from Kathmandu and the surrounding villages come to see that Matsyendranath is safely back in his home temple and pay their respects to him at home. The crowd is nearly equal to that that had gathered four days earlier at Jawalakhel for the bhoṭo festival. This brings to a close the two month long festival of rāto Matsyendranath.

As mentioned above every twelve years the chariot is constructed at Bungamati and pulled all the way to Patan and back. This occured in BS 2012,2024, and will take place again in the year 2036 (1979).

Nothing has been said so far about the second and

smaller chariot which accompanies the large one throughout the course of the Festival. This smaller chariot which contains the image of Minnath, is constructed in Patan and is pulled to the Asoka stupa in Pulchowk to 'meet Matsyendranath and escort him to Gaha Bahal'. It preceeds the large one to Gaha Bahal, but thereafter it follows it throughout the rest of the festival. The image is housed in a temple on the opposite side of the road from Taha Bahal in Patan. The identity of this image is disputed. The ordinary people of Patan refer to it variously as simply another image of Matsyendranath, his son, his nephew, or his niece. Oldfield stated that both images were of Matsyendranath.[27] Gopal Singh Nepali has the following to say:

> The smaller contains an idol of a deity popularly known as chakuwa deya who is believed to be either the son or daughter of Machhendra. . . .
>
> The name Chakuwa deya is derived from the word chaku (molasses) and wa (rice) which are offered to him when Machhendra is carried to the Bungamati. Chakuwa deya is sometimes identified as Karunamaya, a term used to designate Machhendra or Bunga deya himself. This perhaps shows that two different deities, having similar functions, have been brought together by postulating a kinship between them.[28]

Dr. Regmi surmises that Minnath was associated with Matsyendranath only at a much later date, because the first reference to him occurs in a chronicle reference to the festival of the year NS 837 (1716-17 AD.).[29] There are no references to Minnath in Thyāsaphus A and E.

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[27]Oldfield, op. cit., p. 331.
[28]Nepali, op. cit., p. 370-71.
[29]Regmi, op. cit., ii. 657.

One of the wives of the Panjus returning from the chariot in a trance.

The wives of the Panjus receiving the offerings of the devotees.

for individual or tol offerings, local feasts, etc., but it does give some idea of the magnitude of the celebration and how the expenses are met.

Chapter Three
The Legend of Matsyendranath

There are several legendary accounts of the coming of Matsyendranath to the Valley of Nepal. They are presented in the various vaṁśāvalīs, or chronicles, especially in the group referred to as the 'modern chronicles', that is, chronicles written in Nepali, most of them in the nineteenth century. The earlier chronicles, i.e. the Gopālarāja Vaṁśāvalī and the so-called Kaiser Fragment treat of Matsyendranath in passing, but they do not recount the legend. There is one Newari chronicle which has a full account of the legend, though the date of composition is somewhat uncertain. Though the legends presented in the Nepali chronicles and the one Newari chronicle are substiantially the same, there are some striking and important differences. The differences divide the chronicles rather broadly into two groups: those of Buddhist and those of Brahmanic origin.

All of the legends attribute the bringing of Matsyendranath to the good offices of one King Narendradev. Before treating of the legend itself it will not be out of place to say a few words about this king. Early Nepalese history presents us with three Narendradevas, all verifiable historical personages: one in the Licchavi period, one in the eleventh century and one in the twelfth century. There is some doubt about just which Narendradev the chronicles intend.

The twelfth century Narendradev can be ruled out as none of the data fits with the few known facts about him.

The Newari chronicle says that Narendradev is the son of Gunakamanadev.[1] This would be the tenth century Narendradev, who in fact did follow Gunakamanadev. Kirkpatrick's source[2] and the Gopalāraj Vaṁśāvalī[3] both link Matsyendranath with the second Narendradev in their

lists, which would again correspond to the tenth century Narendradev. Wright's chronicle places Narendradev eight generations before Gunakamadev[4] and both the Bhāṣā Vamśāvalī and the Rājbhogmālā,[5] as well as 'Padmagiri's chronicle' link the Matsyendranath story with the first Narendradev on their list. This Narendradev comes shortly after Amsuvarma and hence would be the Licchavi king. The resulting confusion is not surprising as these modern chronicles are notoriously innacurate in their listing of the kings of the period.

After sifting all the evidence, and in light of the more rational dynastic lists that have been drawn up since the discovery of the Gopālarāja Vamśāvalī and recently published inscriptions, modern writers agree that the Narendradev intended is indeed the Licchavi King.[6]

Due to the precise dating of the Chinese annals his reign can be fixed with certainty in the middle of the 7th century A.D. In the year 643 A.D. he welcomed a Chinese envoy to Nepal. After considering all the evidence Dr. Jha concludes that, 'Narendradev was. . . on the throne latest by the year 641 A.D.'[7]

The Newari chronicle belongs to the Buddhist group, and since it presents the fullest account of the legend,

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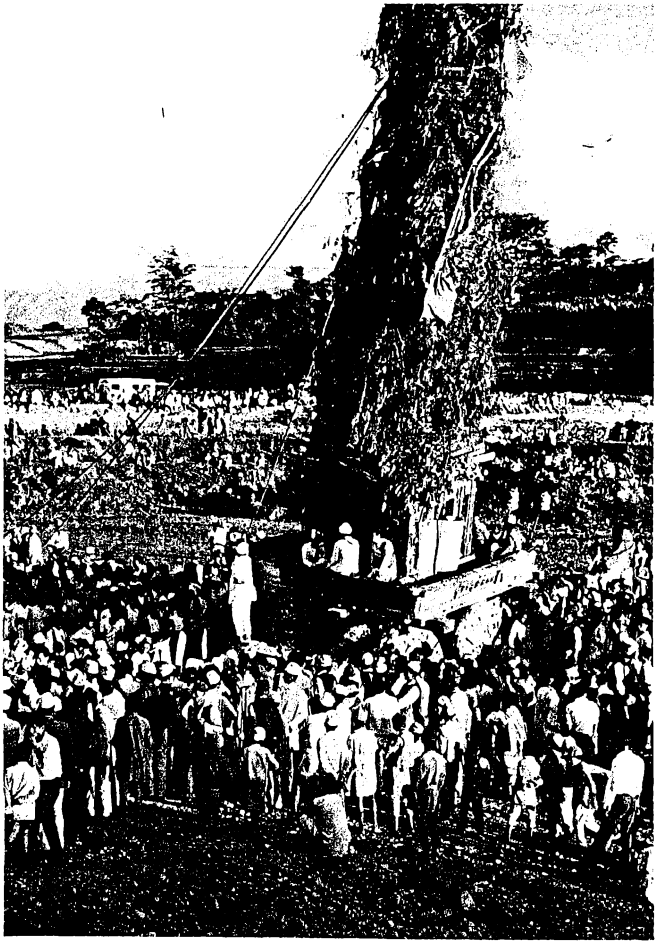
[1]Asha Kaji Bajracharya, Buñgadyo Nepāle Hugh Khañ, 2nd ed. (Patan, 2-24), p. 10.
[2]Colonel Kirkpatrick, An Account of the Kingdom of Nepaul, 2nd printing (new Delhi, 1969), p. 261.
[3]Balchandra Sharma, ed., 'Kathmandū Upatyāko Ek Rājvamśāvali', Ancient Nepal, iv (July 1968), 11-13.
[4]Daniel Wright, History of Nepal, 2nd ed.(Calcutta, 1958), p. 81, 82, 91.
[5]Nayanath Paudel, ed. Bhāṣā Vamśāvalī, Part I, (Kathmandu, 2020) p. 85-86; Deviprasad Lansal, ed., Bhāṣā Vamśāvali, Part II, (Kathmandu, 2023) p. 1-18.
[6]D.R. Regmi, Ancient Nepal 3rd ed. (Calcutta, 1969),p.197.
[7]Hit Narayan Jha, The Licchavis (Varanasi, 1970) p. 125.



Pulling the chariot of Matsyendranath from Bungamati during the twelve year festival of 2024.

its account will be presented first, followed by remarks on the other chronicles of the Buddhist group and those of the Brahmanic group.

The Newari Chronicle. The chronicle in question is entitled Maniratna Mālā. The portion of this work which treats of the Matsyendranath story has been rendered into modern Newari and published by Shri Ashakaji Bajracharya under the title Buñgadyo: Nepāli Hugu Khāñ. The original is written in old Newari and I was informed that it purports to have been written in N.S. 346 (1225-26 A.D.) by one Ananda Vajra. The text used was rather recently copied from the original which is kept at Bungamati. The original manuscript would have to be checked by experts for further verification of the date, but it seems probable that it can be easily placed before the time of the Gorkhali conquest of the Valley. It may be a work such as this which the redactors of the 'modern chronicles' used as their source when they wrote their works in Nepali.[8]

In the Newari chronicle the deity is referred to as Bungadeya, Shri Karunamaya, Loknath, or Aryalokitesvara. He is never called Matsyendranath and the author informed me that the name Matsyendranath occurs nowhere in the chronicle.

The story begins with an account of King Gunakamadeva marrying off his daughter to a white jackal, who in

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[8]The date given for this chronicle is highly suspect on a number of counts. There are no Newari documents older than the 6th century of the Nepal Era. (confer, D.R. Regmi, Medieval Nepal, i. 46) Secondly the Newari inscriptions of the 16th century and the Gopālarāja Vaṁśāvalī have not yet been fully deciphered by the best of scholars. (Confer, Regmi, Medieval Nepal i. 6-27 and Petech, Medieval History of Nepal, p. 7) Yet it seems that this document is readily intelligible. It is possible that the original story was written at that

fact is a manifestation of Narayana. Narayana then appears to his father-in-law in human form and as a boon gives him rice to plant, as up to that time there was no rice in Nepal. The rice is planted, but after the harvest, it is discovered that the husks are empty. During another interview Narayana tells his father-in-law that the Lord of grain, Padma Arya Avalokitesvara Karunamaya, his guru, will come to Nepal one day to fill out the husks. He says that at present Karunamaya has already taken the form of a man and is living in Kāmuni. He is to come to Nepal in the time of the reign of Gunakamadev's son. Narayan vanishes exhorting the king to religious works. The king gives himself up to religious works and as a result a son, Narendradev, is born to him. In due course, the old king crowns his son Narendradev and goes off to the forest to spend his last days in retirement.

The story then shifts to the dwelling of a rich, but childless merchant, Mahadhan. Mahadhan and his wife pray to Karunamaya for a son; he appears and tells them that after four days a hermit will visit them; they are to follow his instructions. The hermit appears in due course and instructs Mahadhan to fill a pot with cow dung and keep it in a dark, secret place for twenty-one days. No one is to look at or touch it. On the last

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[8](Continued.)time and later redactions were made in current Newari. Thirdly, everything fits too well with the cult and the festival as observed today. Fourthly, the reference in the legend to the kings of Patan and Bhaktapur is anachronistic. There were not separate kings in these two cities at the time of Narendradeva nor at the time this document is supposed to have been written. However, it would have been perfectly natural for an author writing in the later Malla period to suppose the existence of separate kingdoms. This was the situation in the later Malla period and a writer would understandably presume that this had always been the case. He would accordingly posit a king in Patan, instead of a 'headman' as one of the other chronicles does.

day the merchant's wife inadvertently throws the pot out. The hermit appears just as the merchant discovers the disaster, and they go to search for the pot in the rubbish heap. In the pot they discover a child which the hermit takes with him since his instructions have not been followed properly. The hermit, who was none other than Karunamaya himself, then takes the child, rears him, initiates him into the tantric practices of the Kanphāṭṭa yogīs and names him Gorakhanath.

Gorakhanath is really an incarnation of Narayan, and when he realizes this and remembers his promise to help bring Karunamaya to Nepal he sets off for Nepal. Arriving in Nepal he arranges for lodging in a liquor shop. He challenges the girl in charge of the shop to supply him with as much as he can drink. She accepts the challenge and the following day he launches himself on an all day drinking bout. At the end of the day he has to acknowledge defeat and congratulates her. Next morning he goes secretly to inspect her liquor stores and finds out that the feat has been accomplished with the help of the nāgas who have wound themselves round her liquor pots. The power over the nāgas had been given the girl by Ganesh. At this Gorakhnath flies into a rage, binds the nine nāgas with a mantra, and takes them off to Mrigasthali where he sits down on them in the lotus posture.

Since the nāgas were imprisoned and could not provide rain a famine follows. The king, Narendradev, summons all the scholars in the country for a consultation. No one can tell him the reason for the drought nor suggest a remedy. Finally he consults a learned guru, one Shantikar Vajracharya of Svyambhunath, who reveals what has happened and tells him that the only remedy is to bring Karunamaya Lokanath to Nepal. Only when he comes will Gorakhnath get up. Lokanath, the guru says, is at present in Kamuni, a land of demons (yakśas) as the youngest of the 500 sons of that land's king. Narendradev asks for directions to Kamuni and

instructions on how to bring Karunamaya. The guru promises to tell all after he has had some time to meditate.

After some time he returns and tells the king that he has now remembered that in his previous life he had served the goddess Yagusvon Sri Yogambar, at a place called Mhayapi. One day the goddess asked him to sacrifice his son to her. The guru was horrified, but the goddess explained that the son was really Karunamaya and therefore not actually his son. She instructed him to sacrifice the son, and burn his body, promising that one day a statue would be made from the bones. This statue would then become the centre of a great chariot festival in honour of Loknath. The festival would bring prosperity to Nepal and those who spurn the festival would die and suffer great tribulation in their next life. Finally, the goddess promised that he would see his son again in a future life when a future pupil of his, one Bandhudatt, would bring Loknath to Nepal.

Bandhudatt, who in fact is now the guru's pupil, is summoned and asked to undertake the mission of bringing Loknath to Nepal. He hesitates, but upon remembering that in a previous life he had been a famous Siddha and had been told by a Boddhisattva who appeared to him that he would one day bring Arya Avalokitesvara Karunamaya to Nepal by his magical powers, he is encouraged and accepts the mission.

Preparations are made and Bandhudatt, as guru, his jajmān King Narendradev, and one Rathan Chakra, a Jyapu from Patan taken along as a porter, set off to find Karunamaya.

Along the road they meet a man who refuses to let them pass; they press the point and he assumes the shape of a gigantic snake. He is none other than Karkotaka, the King of the nāgas. The guru subdues him with his powers and finally Karkotaka agrees to accompany them on

their journey and assist them. The next obstacle they meet is the Shila River. Whatever touches its waters is turned to stone. Karkotaka stretches himself across the river and they cross on him as on a bridge. Unfortunately the tip of his tail touches the water, turns to stone, and falls off. He curses and as a result of this curse all nāgas are now born without tails.

After some time they reach kamarupi in the outskirts of Kamuni city. They decide on a ruse to gain entrance to the city and the presence of the king of the demons. Karkotaka Nagraj enters the king's stomach; the king falls ill and none of his doctors or learned men can cure him. King Narendradev comes to the place and offers the services of his guru, Bandhudatt, whom he introduces as a learned doctor. The king of the demons accepts the offer and promises to fulfil one request of Narendradev, whatever it may be . The king recovers and Narendradev asks for his youngest son. The king repents of his promise, says that he will give anything but this, since the prosperity of his country depends on this son. Narendradev presses the point and the king finally responds that the decision should be left to the boy's mother, Maya Yaksini. She adamantly refuses and Narendradev and company retire to Kamarupi. From there Bandhudatt bewitches the boy with his magical powers, and the boy sneaks out of the city at night passing over his mother who had blocked the doorway. He leaves the city in the form of a bumble bee, leaving behind his lifeless body at the doorway. The bee is put in a golden kalaśa and Narendradev begins the journey back to Nepal.

When the Yakshas discover what has happened they come in the night and snatch the kalaśa away. Narendradev is despondant but Bandhudatt tells him not to fear, he has further magical powers. With his magical powers he summons four Bhairavas. They all go back to the city of the demons and accost the king. After much discussion

and wrangling, and after seeing the terrible powers of the four Bhairavas, the king and queen of the Yaksas let the boy go. They give Bandhudatt some seeds of trees to plant along the way so that when the boy has completed his work in Nepal and the trees have grown up he will be able to find his way home. Bandhudatt renders half the seeds infertile by his mantras and the rest he plants near Nepal.

The four Bhairavas carry Loknath on a portable carrier. When they arrive at the outskirts of Nepal they put the carrier down to rest. After their rest they are unable to lift it. It is soon discovered that 300 yakśas have followed them and cast a spell putting the weight of four mountains on the carrier. Bandhudatt saves the day again. He goes into meditation, telling Narendradev to stay alert as Loknath will come again as a bumble bee. When he enters the kalaśa Narendradev is to cover it immediately. The bee comes, but the king has dozed off and it flies away again. A second time the same thing happens. Bandhudatt warns the king that he can summon Lokanath only once more; if the kalaśa is not covered this time there is no hope. Again the king dozes off. Bandhudatt cannot speak while he is doing his incantations, so he kicks the king to wake him up. The king awakens, curses his guru for the kick and covers the kalaśa.

The party sets off again with the Bhairavas carrying the kalaśa. When they reach Bungma, the four Bhairavas set the kalaśa down and vanish. At that moment the gods all come from Amarapur in heaven to greet Loknath and worship him. Gorakhnath at Mrigasthali hears of Loknath's arrival and sets off to greet him. The nine nāgas rise, enter a black cloud where they salute Loknath, and cause the rain to fall.

As they approach Patan Bandhudatt realizes that the mother of Loknath is hiding in the top of a tree to take her son away. With his incantations he casts a spell

binding her to that spot where she still remains. After this Karkotaka Nagraj departs and returns home.

The others fall into a dispute about where to set up a shrine for Loknath. King Narendradev feels it should be Bhaktapur; it is his capital and he is responsible for bringing the god. The guru feels that it was all his work and hence the shrine should be in his city, Kantipur. The Jyapu pleads for Patan. Finally Bandhudatt suggests that they summon the King of Patan, ask him to summon the oldest and most learned man in Patan, and then let this wise man decide where to place the shrine. All agree, but then the Jyapu sneaks into the city and tells his king, Baladev, what is to happen. The king tricks the old man into opting for Patan. The next day the king is summoned; Baladev calls the old man and Narendradev puts his proposition to him. After some hesitation the old man says that the shrine should be put in Patan, though he really feels that it should be put in Bhaktapur, Narendradev's capital. After pronouncing his decision the old man drops dead because of his dishonesty. But the bargain has been struck and King Narendradev agrees that the shrine be set up in Patan.

The chronicle then says that all this was done in the year 3600 of the Kālī Yug.

The kalaśa is then taken to a Patan vihāra and a man is assigned to make a statue of Lokeswar. To make the statue he grinds up bones found along the river. Next Bandhudatt performs the life sacraments according to the Buddhist śastras and the image is installed in a temple built in the centre of the vihāra. It is then decided to establish a chariot festival for Lokeswar. However, there were already seven other such festivals in Patan, so it is decided to summon these seven gods by magical powers and get them to agree to the suspension of their festivals in lieu of Loknath's festival. Only six come; later the seventh, Jatadhari Lokesvar (Minnath), appears to Bandhudatt in a dream and orders that his

festival be kept according to custom. Hence it is decided to keep his festival along with Loknath's.

There follows a description of the chariot and the meaning of the various symbols: the four wheels are the four Bhairavas; Karkotaka Nagraj is on the main beam; the guru of Loknath, Vajrasattva is placed above in the posture of meditation; the nāgas are represented by the ropes.

The chronicle then states that the guru, Bandhudatt, presided over the first festival, King Narendradev over the second, and the Jyapu porter over the third. The fourth was performed by the gods, demons, yakśas, rakśasas, bhūts, and the people at large. The king then made provisions for the continuance of the festival establishing guṭhis for the upkeep of the temple and the annual conduct of the festival.

King Narendradev, Bandhudatt and the Jyapu later go back to Svyambhunath to visit Shantikar Vajracharya and report on the success of their mission. After this the three of them pay a visit to Loknath, Bandhudatt reads a poem he has composed and then requests the king to do the one thing he has left undone, namely kill him as he had sworn he would when Bandhudatt kicked him. The king tries to avoid this unpleasant task and finally agrees to carrying it out symbolically. An image of Bandhudatt is made and the king slashes it in two; as he does so Bandhudatt dies and passes into the right foot of Loknath. Saddened at this the king recites a poem of praise he had written, passes into the left foot of Karunamaya, and attains mokśā. When Rathan Chakra sees this he feels there is no use in his continuing to live, so he dies and passes into the seat of Karunamaya.

There follows a short note explaining that because of the difficulty of pulling the chariot from Bungamati, it was decided by King Baladev that this should be done only every twelfth year.

Thus concludes the history of the bringing of Karunamaya into the Valley of Nepal.

Wright's Chronicle. The chronicle which Daniel Wright published in 1877 was written by a Gubaju of Mahabodhi Vihara in Patan and translated into English by Munshi Sheo Shankar of the British Residency.[9] The chronicle covers events up to the year 1829 and hence the final redaction cannot have been written before that time. The story of Gorakhnath and Matsyendranath is recounted in detail.[10] Though the central portion of the story concerning the bringing of the deity to Nepal is substantially the same as the above story there are some significant differences, and the introductory part is different. Following are the main differences and points of interest.

The deity is referred to as Matsyendranath-Aryavalokitesvara, and the story begins by recounting the origin of his name. The fourth Buddha was the son of Amitabha. He was named Lokesvara and given the task of creating the world. He first created Brahma and the other gods, and then to ensure their protection he assumed the name of Aryavalokitesvara Padmapani Bodhisattva. He instructed Siva in yoga-jñāna which Siva then recounted one night to Parvati as they dallied by the sea shore. Parvati fell asleep during the recitation, and Lokesvara in the form of a fish took the role of a listener making answers and remarks at suitable intervals. When he finished Siva realized that Parvati was asleep and someone else had actually been listening and responding. He was angry and threatened to curse the listener until Lokesvara revealed himself. Siva fell at his feet and begged forgiveness. From this incident Lokesvara became known as Matsyendranath.

The account then shifts immediately to Gorakhnath

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[9]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, i. 29.
[10]Wright, op. cit., p. 93-90.

in Nepal without any account of his origins. In this account Gorakhnath binds the nine nāgas merely as a device for luring Matsyendranath to Nepal from the Kamani mountain which is too difficult for him to approach.

The king of Nepal is Baradeva, son of Narendradev who has abdicated and gone to spend his last days in retirement. Bandhudatt Acharya is an old man, the guru of the king's father. King Baradeva overhears the old man recounting the story of Gorakhnath and the nāgas to his wife. When confronted by the king, Bandhudatt agrees to go in search of Aryalokitesvara on the condition that his jajmān, the king's father, old king Narendradev, accompanies him. Karkotaka Nagraj is not met along the way but freed from Gorakhnath's grasp by a mantra. They take along a mālī to carry the kalaśa. Aryavalokitesvara is summoned by the power of a mantra, leaves his place on the mountain in the form of a bumble bee and enters the kalaśa. As in the previous account the King sleeps and is finally aroused by Bandhudatt with a kick. The mother of Avalokitesvara, Jnana-dakini, comes with numerous gods, yakśas and devils to prevent the removal of the kalaśa. All the gods of Nepal come and decide to entrust the protection of Nepal to Matsyendranath, and his mother is propitiated with a promise of occasional offerings. The story of the tree seeds to mark the road is repeated.

As the group enters Nepal a great procession is formed. Four Bhairabs from four nearby villages carry the kalasa and all the gods come to do homage:

> Brahma swept the road, reciting Vedas
> as he did so; Visnu blew the sankha;
> Mahadeva sprinkled kalas-water on the
> road; Indra held an umbrella; Yamaraj
> lighted the incense. Varuna sprinkled
> water from a sankha, and rain fell;
> Kuvera scattered riches; Agni displayed
> light; Nairitya removed obstacles;

Vayu held the flag; and Ishan scared away the devils.[11]

These gods, however, were visible only to Bandhudatt and Narendradev; the common people saw only a great concourse of birds and beasts.

They stop to rest along the road and the Bhairava of Harisiddhi, in the shape of a dog barks. This sound of 'bu', Bandhudatt explains, signifies that the place is to be considered the birth place of Matsyendranath. The king decides to build a city and it is called Amarapur in honour of all the gods who came on that day. In this city the kalaśa is enshrined.

The story of the dispute follows, but it is over where to have the chariot festival, not where to put the shrine. The head man of Patan is summoned to settle the dispute. He decides in favour of Patan, because it is his own city and because King Baladeva is currently residing there. Seven okhals are brought to make a platform; the headman mounts this platform, gives his decision, and dies because of the injustice he has done to old King Narendradev who wanted the shrine in Madhyalakhu, as that is his current place of residence.

In order to make an image of Matsyendranath, earth is brought from Kimayapido, which Wright identifies as a place along the Vishnumati where it crosses the road to Balaju. It is the same earth from which the Swayambhu Chaitya was built. After the consecration of the image, the offerings are given to the descendants of one Sunayasri Misra.

Bandhudatt then establishes all the rites for the annual chariot festival. There then follows an account of the festival corresponding to the details as still observed. All other chariot festivals of Patan are

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[11] Wright, op. cit., p. 86.

subsequently abandoned except that of Minnath, who is really sāno Matsyendranath. There then follows the account of the death of Bandhudatt and Narendradev. The Mālī does not die. The year of Matsyendranath's coming is listed as Kaligat 3623.

Levi's Chronicle. Though Levi's chronicle is of Brahmanic origin, written in 1834 by one Siddhi Narayan of Deo Patan,[12] he also gives the Buddhist version of the story. The account is the same as that of Wright's chronicle in nearly all details.[13] Gorakhnath binds the nāgas as a subtrefuge, not in anger. Old Bandhudatt's residence is given as Triratna Vihara in Patan. A mālī and his wife are taken along as companions. Levi's chronicle omits the introductory story of the origin of Lokesvara, but includes the story of Siva and the fish.

The remaining accounts of the Matsyendranath story are all contained in Nepali chronicles and show a definite Brahamanic or Shaivite influence, which gives quite a different twist to the story. In all of these accounts the god is invariably called Matsyendranath, never Bunga-deva, though it is acknowledged that he is recognized as Lokesvara by the Buddhists.

The longest account is found in the Bhāṣā Vāmśāvalī and the Rājbhogmālā.[14] There are several versions of the Bhāṣā Vamśāvalī, of which one is the Rājbhogmālā. Some of the versions end with Prithwi Narayan Shah, some carry on until the time of Bir Shamsher at the end of the 19th century.[15] Hence they were all written after the Gorkhali Conquest.

The Bhāṣā Vamśāvalī account begins with the coming

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[12]Bikramajit Hasrat, History of Nepal (Punjab, 1970), p. zviii.
[13]Sylvain Levi, Le Nepal (Paris, 1905), i. 449.
[14]Bhāṣā Vamśāvalī II, p. 4-17.
[15]Bhāsā Vamśāvalī I, Introduction (no page).

of Gorakhnath, who comes to Nepal to beg alms. The people fail to recognize him, give him no alms and in retaliation he binds the nāgas. The King, Narendradev, summons a council; no one is able to explain the lack of rain. Finally one Bandhudatt, a Bauddhacharya who is equally learned in the ways of Buddhism and Hinduism, is summoned and he explains the mystery. He begins by explaining the origin of Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath. Matsyendranath was born from a fish who had eaten the semen of Shiva which Vishnu had washed from his hand. After washing his hand in the river Vishnu took some cow dung to wipe the rest of the semen from his hand. Gorakhnath was born from the cow dung he used. Bandhudatt explains that Matsyendranath is the guru of Gorakhnath and that Gorakhnath can be induced to rise from the nāgas only if his guru comes.

Bandhudatt advises that he and the king go to fetch Matsyendranath. Dressed as holy men, they summon Karkotaka with a mantra, take along one servant, and set off for Kamarupith, the abode of Matsyendranath. As in the Buddhist legend Matsyendranath is the son of the king of that region. The King is stricken, Bandhudatt cures him and asks as a reward that he be allowed to take the son who is an avatār. The king and the avatār's mother object. Finally Matsyendranath comes to Narendradev and Bandhudatt secretly, and explains that it will be impossible to leave because of the opposition of his parents. He advises them that to bring rain to Nepal they should respect Pashupatinath as he is the Lord of the three worlds and the sea, and all the gods are at his command. A Brahman should be appointed to perform ārya tīrthako jalābhiṣek in the month of Baisakh at Pashupatinath. Only then will rain fall in due measure. Then he tells them to go on their way and he will come to join them in another form.

There follows the account of the coming of the bumble bee into the kalaśa as in the Buddhist recension. Upon arrival in Nepal a place is made for Matsyendranath

in Patan. A brahman by the name of Suneshwar Misra enters into the Bauddhacharya, places the kalaśa in the open place makes a metal statue of Lokesvar and sets it up according to the prescribed rites. Then the brahman performs the daśakarma, as well as all the rites that are ordinarily performed for a woman. This is all done to show that henceforth this god should be equally honoured by Hindus and Buddhists.

Hearing that his guru has arrived Gorakhnath rises to go and pay his respects, and the nāgas return to their place. After this Bandhudatt composes a hymn in honour of Matsyendranath. There follows in the text a long hymn describing Matsyendranath and his feats in previous lives.

The text then says that all this was accomplished in the year Kaligat 3676.

It is then decided to conduct an annual chariot festival in honour of Matsyendranath and a town called Matsyendrapur is erected in his honour.

There follows the account of the end of Bandhudatt and King Narendradev. The text then comments that there had been chariot festivals in Patan yearly in honour of Loknath, Minnath, and other gods. After this they were all suppressed except that of Minnath.

The Rajvamsavali. This chronicle is written in Nepali and covers the period up to the time of Bir Shamsher. It has been edited and published in Ancient Nepal by Bal Chandra Sharma.[16] The editor says he obtained the manuscript from Subba Bhupal Man Sing, but there is no indication given of the author.

The account is a shorter version of the Bhāsā Vamśāvāli account omitting the legends about the origin of Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath and many other details. The deity is referred to only as Macchendra. Again

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[16]Balchandra Sharma, op. cit., p. 11-13.

Gorakhnath binds the nāgas in anger for the lack of respect shown him; the place is given as Mrigasthali. It is the whole concourse of scholars and astrologers in the king's court who explain the mystery to him, and the guru he takes to Kamarupith is one Simbhukar Vajracharya. When they meet Matsyendranath, he says that he will come to Nepal only if he is given permission by Shri Purnachandi. Rites are performed and Purnachandi's permission is obtained. The Bajracharya recites a hundred lakh of japs in Lagan Khel to summon Matsyendranath into the kalaśa.

When Matsyendranath is placed on the chariot for the first time, all the other gods also come to watch. At the time he enters Nepal, Matsyendranath gives the advice about respecting Pasupatinath which is given in the Bhaṣā Vamśāvali A town called Amarapur is built for Matsyendranath and he is kept six months there and six months in Patan.

Padmagiri's Chronicle. Padmagiri's Chronicle, preserved in the India Office Library, London, is written in Nepali by one Padmagiri and ends with an incomplete description of the reign of King Rajendra Bikram Shah. Hence the editor, Dr. Hasrat, concludes its date of composition can be set about 1825.[17] The legend of Matsyendranath recounted in this chronicle is almost identical with the two above.[18] The mystery of the drought is solved by the pundits at King Narendradev's court. Gorakhnath has sat upon the nāgas at Mrigasthali again out of rage because he was given no alms. The king is accompanied to Kamarup by his Guru Bandhudatt Acharya. Karkotaka Nagraj is not mentioned. With Matsyendranath they also bring his followers Puranachandi and Minnath. Matsyendranath arrives in Nepal in the year 3548 of the Kali era. In this version Gorakhnath goes to reside in Sankhamul at the junction of the Hanumati and the

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[17]Bikrama Jit Hasrat, History of Nepal (Panjab, 1970), p. 1

[18]Hasrat, op. cit., p. 44-45.

Bagmati after paying his respects to Matsyendranath. The account ends with the following note:

> While the Rajah went to Kamrup to bring Matsyendranath to Nepal, Matsyendranath had told him that Pasupatinath was the head and master of all the gods, and was in the Rajah's country, and that if the Rajah would pour on Pasupati's head water of the Vagmati for the whole month of Vaisakha he would get rain as much as he was in want of. According to the above instructions of Matsyendranath, the Rajah established the annual Jalayatra of Pasupati, which takes place in the month of Vaisakha.[19]

All of the above accounts agree on certain points while the two groups diverge rather consistently on other points.

All agree on linking the incident with King Narendradev and on the Indian origin of Matsyendranath. The place of origin is consistently given as Kamarup, or Kamarupith, which corresponds to the area of modern Assam or the north-eastern part of Bengal. In all accounts the bringing of Matsyendranath follows upon a drought caused by Gorakhnath's capture of the nāgas. Though the Newari chronicle never uses the name of Matsyendranath, all the accounts speak of Gorakhnath; and this is the only name ever used for him. All agree on the main details of the bringing of Matsyendranath, his coming in the kalaśa, the opposition of people in Kamarup, the accompaniment of the four Bhairavas, the dual residence of Matsyendranath in Nepal, and the establishment of the annual chariot festival in his honour. All accounts agree in giving the powers of a powerful siddha to Bandhudatt.

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[19] Hasrat, op. cit., p. 45.

The two groups of accounts differ on the question of the origin of Gorakhnath and Matsyendranath and the names used for Matsyendranath. They differ on the attitude of Gorakhnath. In the Buddhist accounts he binds the nāgas as a rule to lure his guru to Nepal, or in retaliation for the trick played on him by the god Ganesh. In the Brahmanical accounts he is angered because the people in general do not show him proper respect. They differ in their treatment of the other gods. Whereas the Buddhist accounts have the whole concourse of the gods coming to pay their respects to Matsyendranath, in the Brahmanic accounts Matsyendranath defers to Pashupati, and the other gods appear only in one account where they merely come to witness the spectacle not to pay homage to Matsyendranath. Whereas in the Buddhist accounts Bandhudatt is a Bauddhacharya, in the Brahmanic accounts he is variously simply Acharya (and hence a Brahman), a Bauddharcharya equally learned in the lore of the way of Shiva, or a Bauddhacharya who is possessed by the spirit of a Brahman at the crucial moment when the must perform the sanskāras.

These accounts are a legendary mixture of myth, folk beliefs and historical data. Before an attempt is made to draw further conclusions from the data presented here it will be necessary to give a quick review of the reliable historical data available about the cult of Matsyendranath and his festival. This will be undertaken in the next chapter. First, however, it will not be out of place to give a brief account of the legend concerning the bhoto jātra, or the showing of Matsyendranath's shirt.

The legends already treated have nothing to say about this part of the festival, nor are there any references to it in the historical data available from the Malla period. The first available accounts of this part of the festival are in the descriptions of the foreigners who visited Nepal in the 18th and 19th centuries. There is simply not enough data available to

determine when this observance was added to the festival, but the fact that there are legends concerning it and these legends are not contained in the standard accounts would indicate that it was a later addition.

There are a number of accounts of this legend: one in an article published in the Gorkhāpatra by Shri Manabajra Bajracharya,[20] one in Aitihasik Kathā Sanghra, by Lalit Jung Sijapati,[21] one in Malla Kalin Nepal, by Lila Bhakta Munakarmi,[22] and one in Festivals in Nepal by Shrestha and Singh.[23] These are all recent works and none of the authors list the source of their legend. Wright's chronicle recounts a similar story of a Vaidya of Harisimha Deva's entourage who is summoned by Karkotak Nagraj to cure his wife. In his story though there is no connection with Matsyendranath. As a reward the Vaidya is given a place to stay at Sesnarayan. The same story is also recounted in the Rajvamsavali. All of the accounts are substantially the same. I will summarize the story as found in Bajracharya's article and then add a few comments about the differences in the other accounts.

Karkotak Nagraj, who lives in a pond behind Chobar, called Taudah, one day summons a Jyapu, who has a reputation as something of a doctor, to his palace to cure his wife of an eye disease. The Jyapu obliges, cures the wife, and as a reward is given a valuable, jewel studded bhoṭo and other gifts. After this he wears the bhoṭo at all times. One day he lays the bhoṭo aside to work in his field and it is stolen. The Jyapu

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[20]Manabajra Bajracharya, 'Bhoṭo Dekhāune Yātra', Gorkhāpatra (Srāwan 2, 2022), p. 9.
[21]Lalitjung Sijapati, Nepāli Aitihāsik Kathā Saṅgrah (Kathmandu, 2011), p. 42.
[22]Lila Bhakta Munakarmi, Malla Kālin Nepāñ (Kathmandu, 2025) p. 153-154.
[23]D.B. Shrestha and C.B. Singh, Festivals in Nepal (Kathmandu, 1970), p. 18.

finds no clue of the thief until the last day of Matsyendranath's festival. There at Jawalakhel the Jyapu sees a group of miscreants and among them the thief of his bhoṭo. He tries to get it back. A disturbance ensues and a strong man, who later turns out to be Karkotaka in disguise, comes to his aid, but they cannot get it away from the thief. The crowd finally proposes that the two of them donate the bhoṭo to the god Matsyendranath; the thief agrees and the bhoṭo is given to Matsyendranath while the whole crowd watches on. The crowd declares that henceforth, this bhoṭo is to be shown to the public each year.

In the accounts of Sijapati and Munakarmi the story takes place in the time of King Gunakamadev. The king intervenes to settle the dispute on the day before the final ceremonies of the Chariot Festival. He tells the thief and the Jyapu each to come back the next day with whatever proof he can muster of his ownership of the bhoṭo. The king will then judge the case. The thief, of course, has no proof so he does not show up the next day. The Jyapu is afraid that the thief will trick him somehow, that the judgment will go against him, and he will be punished by the king; so he also stays away. The king shows the bhoṭo asking the rightful owner to come forward. No one comes and finally it is decided to leave it for safekeeping with Matsyendranath and show it each year until it is claimed by the rightful owner. So far the owner has not turned up.

Wright claimed that the bhoṭo was shown each year to demonstrate to the people that Matsyendranath takes nothing away from them.[25] Except for those who have taken it from Wright, no other author has given this interpretation nor is it current among the people of Patan today.

As the legend stands it indicates that the bhoṭo

[25]Wright, op. cit., p. 21.

has only a very accidental connection with the whole festival. Yet to many people today, foreigners and Nepalis alike, the whole festival is known as bhoṭo Jātra and if asked to describe the festival of Matsyendranath it is the bhoṭo jātra they describe. Perhaps this is due to the fact that nowadays the people of Patan and the farmers from the surrounding areas are the only ones who participate in the rest of the festival. On the final day when the King comes, people from all over the city come; and most of them seem unaware that this day is merely the last day of a two month long festival, and that the ceremony they witness is perhaps the least important of the whole festival as far as the people of Patan are concerned. For them it merely signifies that their festival is over, and that they can now count on Matsyendranath's intervention to insure timely rains.

Chapter Four
History of the Cult and Festival of Matsyendranath

This chapter will give a survey of the historical data relevant to the cult and the festival of Matsyendranath. The first part will present short references found in the various vaṁśāvalīs, inscriptions and thyāsaphūs. The second part will consist in a brief survey of the fuller accounts written by various foreigners who visited or lived in Nepal from the last days of the Malla rule to the days of Chandra Shamshere's administration.

In regard to the historical value of the references in the first part, the following should be noted. The inscriptions are reliable sources of information. They record the establishment or repair of temples, setting up of gūṭhi, regulations for the conduct of festivals, and the like. The dates are authentic, the shrines still in existence, and since the purpose of the inscriptions is religious, they are generally free of the excessively laudatory flattery and the highly suspect recital of the great deeds of the reigning monarch.

The thyāsaphūs are diaries maintained by scribes either in the form of annotations to another manuscript or as separate works. They cover various sections of the late Malla period and record incidents concerned with the royal family, the ministers, important political or religious events, and the like.[1] Dr. Regmi warns that not all the data presented in the documents are reliable. Often these marginal notes were added later, long after the events in question. Hence the historical reliability depends on the ability of the scholars to determine whether the notation was made at the time of the event or much later, a very difficult and often

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[1]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. 13.

impossible task.[2] Another method of checking the authenticity of the date is to examine whether or not it contradicts or confirms known historical facts.

The 'later' or Nepali chronicles present another problem. For the pre-Malla period and the early Malla period, down to the division of the Valley, these present a corrupted and distorted tradition.[3] However, they are much more reliable for the later Malla period.[4] Evidently these chronicles were written after the Gorkhali conquest by Nepali writers using some such source as the above mentioned thyāsaphūs. In dealing with references to Matsyendranath given in these chronicles and in the thyāsaphūs, I have generally omitted references that contradict known historical facts, e.g. gifts to the temple attributed to a king several years after the known date of his death. In the few cases where the contradictory reference has been included this will be noted in the footnotes. In general a rather high degree of credibility can be assigned to the references in the chronicles and thyāsaphūs. They deal with religious and cultural events which do not have political overtones. Hence there would have been generally no reason to fabricate these references in order to curry favour with the current political powers. Furthermore, the notes were made by religious functionaries who were most intimately concerned with accurate recording of religious events, donations, construction of temples, and the like, and who were anxious to give a religious explanation for

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[1]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. 13.
[2]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. 20-21.
[3]Luciano Petech, Mediaeval History of Nepal (Rome, 1958), p. 9.
[4]Regmi, Medieval Nepal i. 31, 36; i. 21. Regmi notes that his chronicle is quite reliable for the time from Srinivasa Malla onwards. He does not name the chronicle but it seems to be a version of the Bhāṣā vaṁśāvali

current events. No doubt, modern, scientific man would not accept many of the explanations but even then and in cases where the references contain historical errors, they do show the cultural and religious atmosphere of the age in which they were written, an historical datum that is quite to the purpose of this work.

Nearly all of these references are dated in the Nepal (or Newari) era. The entries below are given in chronological order according to this era with the corresponding years (or exact date if known) of the Christian era given in parentheses. For the regnal dates of the Malla Kings the dates of Dr. Regmi in his Medieval Nepal and Petech in his Mediaeval History of Nepal have been followed.

In summarising or quoting the reference the name of the deity has been given exactly as found in the text or inscription in question. This is important for any attempt to trace the development of the cult. Many of the English or Nepali translations given in various books are misleading as they invariably translate Bungadeva, Lokesvara, Karunamaya, etc. as 'Macchendranath'.

Prior to the Nepal Era: There are two references to our purpose prior to 879 A.D. They are both contained in the Gopālarāja Vaṁśāvalī. The first reference is to the begining of the festival and it states that King Narendradev and Acharya Bandhudatt were jointly responsible for initiating the jātra of Sri Bugma Lokesvara. The second reference states that Balarjunadev gave his crown to Bugma Lokesvara.[5] The regnal dates of King

[5]Petech, op. cit., p. 30; Regmi, Medieval Nepal iii, Appendix I, p. 118. In many of these notes for this chapter, two references will be given. The first indicates where the text is treated or translated; the second indicates where the original is found.

Balarjunadev are not certain as the whole period is shrouded in darkness, but he must surely be placed before 879 A.D.[6]

N.S. 347-355: A Tibetan monk visited Nepal about 1226 A.D. and stayed until about 1234. His biography, recently translated and published from Patna contains the following data:

> Dharmasvamin talked of two more monasteries (Viharas) one called Tham. . . and another called the vihara of Bu-kham with a 'miraculous image of Avalokitesvara made of sandal wood, of red colour, in the aspect of a five year old boy.'. . .' On the 8th day of the middle autum month the image of the Arya of Bu-kham is taken out and offerings are made to it, and a great spectacle takes place. In general, people make offerings to the image and especially the king and the wealthy people, and all invite the image to their homes and present offerings to it, which consist of the five sacrificial subjects, such as curds, milk, raw sugar, honey and sugar. They pour these substances over the head of the image and then bathe it, the water and victuals are then consumed (by the people). Thus they worship for half a month. Through these ablutions, the bright vermillion red paint (of the image) is washed away. Then on the seventh day of the next month, young Tantrics called han-du, holding in their hands fly-wisk, and musical instruments invite the image back to the temple amidst a great spectacle. On the eight day (of the month) they again paint the image with red clay, said the Dharmasvamin, the Dharmasvamin explained that there were the offerings (dana) of the five

[6]Dispite the uncertainty of the period, cultural data such as this is most probably quite accurate.

essences mentioned in the third chapter of the Madhyamaka-Tarnavali.'[7]

N.S. 417 (Feb. 1294): The Khasya Malla leader, Jitari Malla invaded the Valley. He burned down many villages and then went to pay his respects to Svayambhunath and Bugmalokesvara.[8]

N.S. 433 (Feb. 1313): The Khasya King Ripu Malla entered Nepal and spent 18 days at Buga. He left shortly thereafter and two months later, on 20 April 1313, the King of Nepal Jayarudra Malla performed the regular rites of the chariot festival (Mahajātra).[9]

N.S. 507 (22 April, 1387): Jayasimha Rama Mahatha, the powerful minister of Bhatgaon, accompanied King Jayasthiti Malla and his three sons at the Bugmayātra.[10]

N.S. 528 (1408): A disastrous earthquake is reported in the month of Bhadra, as a result of which the temple of Macchendranath and other buildings were levelled.[11]

N.S. 584-620 (1428-82): This is the period of the reign of Yaksha Malla. There is an inscription erected during his reign at the temple in Taha Bahal. Though the inscription is badly damaged (not one line is complete) the king is mentioned and 'Śri Mat Śri Āryāvaloki. . .' is inscribed on another partial line.[12]

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[7]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, i. 560, quoting Chag-lo-tsa-ba chos-rje-daal, Tr. George Roerich (Patna, 1959), p. 53-55.
[8]Petech, op. cit., p. 102; Regmi, Medieval Nepal, iii. Part I, p. 122.
[9]Regmi, Medieval Nepal i. 25; iii. 137.
[10]Petech, op. cit., p. 146; Regmi, Medieval Nepal iii, Part I, p. 156.
[11]Wright, op. cit., p. 179-80; the same data is given in the Bhaṣa Vamśāvalī, Part II, p. 35.
[12]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, iii. Part I, p. 76-77.

N.S. 602-625 (1482-1505): This is the period of the reign of Raya Malla. One year during his reign he attended the 12 yearly drama of Harisiddhi at Amarapuri (Bungamati). (Both names are given in the text.)[13]

N.S. 741 (1621): Siddhinarasimha Malla added a story to the temple of Machindranath, gilded the roof, and added a gujūr and a golden lotus.[14]

N.S. 744 (1624): A long description describes the ill-fated festival of this year:

> The painters of Bhatgaon did not come to the Snan-jatra of Machchhindranath; the image was taken out by Gangaram of Kobahal and two others, and the deity was bathed by two instead of four persons. The jatra commenced, the rath stopped after advancing a bowshot. The next day the same thing occurred. On the sixth day the rath reached Gwaltichok. The next day the wheels again stuck in the ground; the following day the rath did not reach Ekaltyaga, for in Satyavagal it jumped and the front broke. The next day it was repaired and dragged to Ekaltyagal. This day the rath was moved in the afternoon, and it got as far as Devagal in Evala. On the 1st of Baisakh Sudi it reached Punkhel. The next day it got to Purchokjhangra and the jatra of Gaobahal was held. The next day the wheels stuck at Maha-pal, and the rath did not reach Nogal; therefore the Nogal-jatra was held on the next day, the 4th of Baisakh. On the full moon the Lagan-jatra did not take place. Next day the rath arrived and stopped at Thanti. After this it reached Jyabal in twelve days, on the 1st of Jeth Sudi. On the 4th of Jeth Sudi the rath moved, but before reaching Lisochak,

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[13] Rājvamśāli, Ancient Nepal, No 5, p. 5.

[14] Bhaṣa Vamśāvalī, Part II, p. 62; also found in the 'Rājbhogmāllā', Ancient Nepal, No. 9, p. 24.

the right wheel stuck in the earth, and the next day the other broke. The following day the rath was repaired, but two wheels broke immediately on its being put in motion. The day after it remained at Yepakula, and the next day it crossed the Nikhu Khola, but the right wheel stuck in the earth. The next day the shaft broke, and the next day the rath stopped at Ukalomani, where it stayed for twelve days without moving. After this the image was taken out of the rath, put into a khat, and conveyed back to its own place. This year Jideva Nayak and Amrit Sinhadeva Nayak were the priests of Machchhindranath.[15]

N.S. 741 + (1620 +): During the time of Siddhinarasimha Malla after the chariot had been stuck for 15 days one year, a two year old child declared that if the Rajguru Bishwanath Upadhyaya sat on the chariot it would move. The king understood that he had received a vision of Gopi Krisna, and had the chariot moved according to instructions. From that time onward there has been the custom of Brahmans starting the chariot.[16]

N.S. 776 (1656): Early in the year, the temple of Buga-devata was struck by lightning. During the festival a child came and sat on the chariot and declared that the god was not pleased with Siddhinarasimha because he had built the temple so high.[17]

N.S. 777 (1657): This year there was trouble of a different sort:

On the day on which the rath of Machchhindranatha ought to arrive at Jyabal, great exertions were made to drag it to that place, and it got there late in the evening. The following day the rath

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[15]Wright, op. cit., p. 146-47.
[16]Rajvamśavali', Ancient Nepal, No 5, p. 13.
[17]Wright, op. cit., p. 147.

moved of itself. Again, on the next day, while the priests were taking their food, the rath moved of itself. Lungsinha Yangwal saw this. In carring the rath across the Bagmati, the shaft of Mina-nath's rath sunk so low that it touched the ground. On taking the image of Machchhindranath back to Bugmati, it was found that the nag-mani (jewel) in his coat was missing. In the kundal (ear ornament) one of the feet of the horse harnessed to the car of the sun was wanting. The Garud in the coat and the parrot had also both lost their bills. Such ill omens had never been heard of before. This happened in the reign of Sri Sri Jaya Sri-nivasa Malla Thakur Raja, when Bimalsinha and Dipankar were the priests. Niva-surya Bandya of Itilanhe reported to the Raja that Rup-sinha Bandya of Illayanthe had seen the grandson of Mal-sinha bring the missing jewel to Kaku Bandya, to get it mounted in a ring, and that he had it in his own hands. The Raja, however, went to visit Machchhindranatha on the 14th of Jeth Krishna, on which day the priests are relieved by others, who take over charge of the ornaments, etc. and he found that the ruby was lying in one of the folds of the coat. He had it mounted with twelve diamonds round it, and presented it to the deity. He punished Rup-sinha Bandya by confiscating all his property and Niva-surya Bandya by confiscating all his property outside of his house, for making false accusation.[18]

N.S. 782 (1662): In this year Srinivasa Malla set up a gūṭhi for ārathi pūjā in the Matsyendranath temple. He made a golden water tap in Bungamati. In this year since the queen of Pratap Malla had died the festival of

[18]Wright, op. cit., p. 148. At this time the father of Srinivasa was not dead, but according to scholars he had handed over all authority to his son by the year 778 at the latest. Confer Regmi, Medieval Nepal ii. 277-78.

Matsyendranath was held without instruments. A great wind blew down many trees, and took off the roofs of houses. The prince Chhatranarasimha Malla died, and there were later fires in the city. Finally the king decided that the reason for all these disasters was that instruments had not been played during the festival, so he went to Taudah to recite prayers on the day of the solar eclipse.[19]

N.S. 783 (1663): This year Pratap Malla offered a finial for the temple at Taha Bahal and on the same day Srinivasa Malla made other offerings to Sri Sri Sri Macchendranath.[20]

N.S. 784 (1664): During the festival this year the chariot fell over into a pond. Only after it had been righted could the festival be completed.[21]

N.S. 785 (1665): Siddhinarasimha had a golden roof constructed for the middle story of the Macchindranath temple and a golden umbrella made for the top of the temple.[22]

N.S. 788 (1668): Pratap Malla had a golden torana made for the Bungamati temple of Rudrakanda Bhairava; tears flowed from the eyes of Machendranath.[23]

N.S. 792 (1672): An inscription allegedly dated this year has the following to say:

> There is a Nepalese inscription which reads- the chiefs of the Yogis call him King of Fishes (Matsyendra); the devotees of the female deities call him

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[19] 'Rājbhogmāllā', Ancient Nepal, No 10, p. 3.
[20] Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. 82; iii, Part II, p. 101.
[21] Regmi, Medieval Nepal, iii, Part II, p. 119.
[22] Bhaṣa Vaṁśāvalī, Part II, p. 66. Confer the note on page 10 the reign of Siddhinarasimha.
[23] Bhāṣā Vaṁśāvali, Part II, p. 69.

Lokeswar. All honour to this being whose true form is Brahma.[24]

N.S. 793 (16 Feb. 1673): On this day Srinivasa Malla erected a long inscription in the temple at Taha Bahal concerning the festival and the cult of the deity throughout the year.[25] In the inscription the following names are used for the deity: Sri Sri Sri Aryalokitesvara Bhattaraka, Sri Tin Bunga Ista Devata, Sri Tin Trailokya-nath. At several points in the inscription the king insists that he has not published this inscription on his own but has taken the advice of and established as witnesses Prince Yoganarasimha, the Minister Bhagirath Bhaya, and others. He notes that after a thorough investigation of all the customs, ceremonies, and rites pertaining to the festival he has put up this inscription in the current (Newari) language so that there will be no doubt about what is to be done and what are the duties of all concerned. Following are some of the more notable points brought out in the inscription.

First is to be performed the bathing ceremony, after that the Chariot Festival. The festival ends when the time comes to take the image back to Bungamati. Later in the year the auspicious moment is to be determined for bringing the image back to Taha Bahal (No. 3). Whether it be good times or times of trouble the king himself must take part and see that everything

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[24]G.W. Briggs, Gorakhnath and the Kanphatta Yogis (Calcutta, 1958), p. 321. He quotes the inscription from the Indian Antiquary and does not give the original nor does he indicate where the inscription was supposed to have been found.

[25]Ramji Tewari, etc., ed. Abhilekh Saṅgrah, x. 7-11. For this inscription I am indebted to an unpublished Nepali translation of the old Newari by Shri Asha Kaji Bajracharya of Patan.

is carried out properly (No. 4). There must be no quarrels among the various people assigned to prepare the chariot, the officials, those in charge of the wheels, etc. (No. 6). When the chariot is being prepared the various workers assigned must be summoned each day. If they make excuses and do not come when called, the chariot will not be properly constructed and will break down later (No. 8). The workers who lack proper respect for the deity and fail in their duties will experience the virtues of the king and the disfavour of the deity (No. 9). Again there follows an exhortation to the workers; even if they are not called they cannot use this as an excuse for staying home. Until their work is finished they must not stay at home (No.10). The kings must stir themselves with all their powers, and see that everything is done properly and on time (No. 11). The workers must put their mind to carrying out their tasks as they have done in the past. Useless and second rate materials must not be used in the construction of the chariot. If they are, the workers will experience the virtue of the king and feel the disfavour of the god (No. 13). There follows a detailed listing of the lands set aside as gūṭhī for the deity. A silver lamp has been set up in the temple; it must be lit daily and arati pūjā performed (No. 17). Kusalay Jogis from Kobaha and Ekhalakhu ṭols have been assigned to blow the conch and perform puja at this time (No. 17). There follows another long list of lands set aside as gūṭhī. From the income of this land yearly pūjās must be performed. For this the gūṭhiyārs must come and recite the śāstra, and three jogis from three different tols are assigned to provide musical accompaniment (No. 22). There follows a note of thanks and praise for a man of Tithi Bahal who has helped to make the inscription, all at his own expense (No. 24). There follows a description of donations made by the king from which the salaries of the gūṭhiyārs are to be taken (No. 27). Other lands are set aside to feed those who come to the temple to fast, pray, and offer sacrifice (No. 28). A monthly pūjā is to be performed. For this land is set aside and whatever

income is left over after the pūjā has been performed, is to be used to perform pūjā to the image of Mahadev which is in the same place (No. 29-30). Land is set aside to pay for the bathing ceremony for which Ganges water and other items are required. At the time of the ceremony instruments are to be played and lamps lit. (No. 32). The courtiers, the business men, the leaders of the ṭols, and the gūṭhi officials must not quarrel over the gūṭhi funds. Those who do, as well as those who appropriate the funds themselves and thereby spoil the whole festival, are guilty of a sin equal to the killing of cows, brahmans, parents, gurus, biksus, and the gods themselves (No. 34). It is strictly forbidden for everybody, the nobility and the commoners, to misappropriate the gūthi funds whether by taking a gift from someone connected with the gūṭhi, by flattering the king and requesting it of him, by selling or buying the gūṭhi lands, by farming them, or building houses on them (No. 38). The king promises that anyone who does so will feel the disfavour of the deity (No. 39). There follows a list of areas in which the king expects the cooperation of the citizens: building walls and fortifications, defense, building of bridges, etc. Those who don't do the work assigned should be punished with a fine, or imprisoned, or banished. If such punishment is given the citizens should not be offended, equal treatment will be given even to the relatives of the king and the courtiers (No. 40-45).

Mention is made of another gūṭhi set aside for jogis (50); with this money pūjā is to be performed and the jogis fed (No. 52). The date is given in No. 54 and 55. What follows seems to be rather an after-thought. More warnings are given those who misappropriate gūṭhi funds. (No. 56). Warnings are given against quarreling, fighting, and spoiling the whole festival. Money lenders must not jail their debtors during the time of the festival. Fifteen days before the Chariot Festival, men are assigned to go from ṭol to ṭol to announce the coming festival (No. 57). From the time Trilokyanath is put on the chariot until the end of the festival no one is to

wear shoes inside the city; this is an old custom and it is to be observed (No. 58). The king concludes by noting that the deity has favoured the country by his presence which defends the country and the citizens. Hence it is the duty of all to receive him and keep his festival in a fitting manner.

N.S. 796 (23 October 1675): On this day Srinivasa Malla put up an inscription in Bungamati. The inscription:

> regulated entry of those devotees who used the precinct as a shelter for a month's stay undergoing upavāsa to please god Buga. No untouchable castes as well as Dom and Naya castes were allowed to undertake the upavāsa by using the premises. Only such people who came there on Asvina Sukla 15 were to be allowed. The entry of others was subject to decision by the office bearers of the Vihara.[26]

N.S. 801 (1681): Thyāsaphū E gives a long description of the festival of this year and the following year, both of which were full of ill omens. One year the main beam broke twelve times, another year fifteen times. In 802 when the chariot reached Lagankhel, after many breakdowns and delays a sacrifice was performed at the altar of Dulana the mother of Bugmadeva and brahmans recited mantras.[27]

N.S. 801 (27 Nov. 1680): On this day Srinivasa Malla set up another inscription in Bungamati noting repairs done there.[28]

N.S. 804-825 (1684-1705): These are the years of the reign of Yognarendra Malla. He gave a copy of a

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[26]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. 287; iv. p. 168.
[27]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. 305; ii. Part II, p. 88.
[28]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, iv. 187.

manuscript containing the history of Macchindranath, written in golden letters, to one Dharmaraj Pandit, to be recited at the Manimaṇḍapa. He also assigned further gūṭhis for Macchindranatha.[29]

N.S. 810 (1690): This year the chariot fell over and Macchindra spoke through a Banra giving a message to the king that if a golden ornament were offered to the deity the festival could be carried on without further incident. The chariot was righted with ropes, the golden mālā was offered, and the festival completed.[30]

N.S. 811 (1690): This year the chariot of Bugadeva broke down, the image was removed and only after some time spent in repairs was the festival concluded.[31]

N.S. 813 (1693): This was a year for the twelve year festival and King Yognarendra Malla accompanied the chariot from Bungamati and back again. There were several break-downs again.[32]

N.S. 814 (1794): This year the King of Bhakatapur offered a statue of Narendradev who had brought Machindranath to Nepal. As he was not on good terms with the King of Patan, he had to set up the statue without the King of Patan attending.[33]

N.S. 821 (1700): The inaugural ceremony of the manimaṇḍapa was performed this year in Chaitra.[34]

N.S. 825 (1705): The twelve year Chariot Festival of Sri Sri Sri Bugadeva, which was the last in the life of Yognarendra Malla, was full of bad omens. The main

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[29]Wright, op. cit., p. 151.
[30]Bhāṣā Vaṁśāvalī, Part II, p. 72.
[31]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. 147; iii, Part II, p. 35.
[32]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. 320-321;iii, Part II, p. 97.
[33]Bhāṣā Vaṁśāvalī, Part II, p. 72.
[34]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. 327.

beam broke several times and the various ceremonies could not be performed at the prescribed times.[35]

N.S. 825 (1705): Bhaskar Malla was present at the Chariot Festival of Sri Sri Sri Bugadeva.[36]

N.S. 829 (1708-09): King Indra Malla died the day before Chaitra Pūrṇima so the courtiers called the son of Yognerendra, Mahindra Malla, to officiate at the bathing ceremony of Bugadeva.[37]

N.S. 831 (1710-11): A manuscript kept in the temple of Taha Bahal bears this date; the deity is referred to as Karunamaya.[38]

N.S. 832 (1711-12): The King, Mahindra Malla, had gone to Kantipur to stay and was not in Patan when it came time for the bathing ceremony of Bugadeva, so the ceremony was finally carried out without him. He did not show up for the Bugamati festival either so the image was carried without him.[39]

N.S. 837 (1717): The festival this year was full of bad omens. The main beam broke thirty-one times as the chariot was being drawn. The king was accompanying the procession. The chariot of Minnath caught fire. The King, Hridinarasimha Malla, died shortly afterwards.[40]

N.S. 841 (1721): The stone facing was set around the Machindra temple in the month of Baisakh.[41]

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[35]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. p. 336; iii. Part II, p. 52.
[36]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. 161; iii. Part II, p. 52.
[37]Gautambajra Bajracharya, 'Aprakāśaphū,' Pūrṇimā, xii (Māgh, 2023), p. 31.
[38]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. 347.
[39]Gautambajra Bajracharya, 'Aprkāśit Thayasaphu,' Pūrṇimā, xii (Magh, 2023), p. 31.
[40]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. 352.
[41]Bhāṣā Vaṁśāvalī Part II, p. 75.

N.S. 844 (1724): As the image of Machindranath was being taken down from the chariot a dog touched it. After arrival in Bungamati, a pig touched it and prāyaśchit had to be performed.[42]

N.S. 851 (1730-31): A silver ornament was offered to Machindranath by the king.[43]

N.S. 861 (1741): This year the chariot of Macchendranath fell to the ground twice. This was a bad omen and propitiatory rites were performed by Rajyaprakash Malla at the shrine of Pashupatinath. This was at the time when Jayaprakash Malla had left Kantipur and was roaming about the Valley.[44]

N.S. 866 (1746): An inscription on the chariot shrine says that in this year the four sides of the metallic balcony were offered by Rajyaprakash Malla.[45]

N.S. 867 (1747): In Baisakh after the chariot had been stuck for some time, a devata appeared, touched the chariot, paid his respects, and disappeared. Nobody could recognise or catch him. After this the festival went on without incident.[46]

N.S. 868 (1747-48): A Newari inscription at the Vishnu temple at Sundhara bearing this date states that one Sanja Bharo offered land for daily religious ceremonies, including the burning of a lamp at the time of the Nugalayātra of Sri Tin Machendranath.[47]

N.S. 871 (1751): On the last day of the dark half

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[42] Bhāṣā Vaṁśāvalī, Part II, p. 75.
[43] Bhaṣa Vaṁśavali, Part II, p. 76.
[44] Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. 190
[45] Hemraj Sakya and R. Vaidya, Medieval Nepal (Kathmandu, 1970), p. 225-26.
[46] Bhāṣā Vaṁśāvali, Part II, p. 111.
[47] Sakya and Vaidya, op. cit., p. 227-28.

The lamp which is lit three times a day throughout the year before the image with the money from a fund set up by King Srinivasa Malla in 1673.

of the month of Jestha, the chariot arrived at Nakhu. On this day there was a solar eclipse, so King Jyaprakash Malla and many citizens went down to have a ceremonial bath. The king gave many gifts. Never before had such a festival been heard of.[48]

N.S. 877 (1757): The Gorkhali King Prithwinarayan Shah had entered the Valley and taken some villages which belonged to Patan. In Kartik the image of Machindranath was brought to Patan. Since the Gorkhali king would neither let the bāṇḍās from the village come to the city nor those from the city go there, the Kajis of Patan finally had to give the King of Gorkha some money so that the festival could be carried on.[49]

N.S. 880 (1760): As the King, Visvajit Malla, was returning after paying his respects to Matsyendranath, he suddenly took ill. While watching the festival he had complained of giddiness and Matsyendra appeared to turn his back. Shortly afterwards he died.[50]

N.S. 938 (1817): During the Chariot Festival the face of the statue cracked and wrinkled. Five days after Macchindranath had been taken back to Bungamati there was an earthquake which lasted for 21 palas; many houses and temples were destroyed and there was much loss of animal life. This was in the time of King Rajendra Bikram Shah.[51]

N.S. 977 (1866): During the Chariot Festival, when the chariot was approaching the darbār from Gaha Bahal, both chariots caught fire and only the images were not damaged.[52]

The last reference comes from a work written in

[48] Bhāṣā Vaṁśāvalī, Part II, p. 77.
[49] Bhaṣa Vaṁśāvalī, Part II, p. 78.
[50] Regmi, Medieval Nepal, ii. 362.
[51] Rajvaṁśāvalī; Ancient Nepal No. 6, p. 19.
[52] 'Rajvaṁśāvalī,' Ancient Nepal, No. 6, p. 25.

Patan about the middle of the last century by one Pandit Sundarananda, and is entitled Triratna Saundarya Gāthā. It is a poetical work written primarily to praise the King and the Prime Minister, Bhim Sen Thapa. It is written mostly in Sanskrit with a Nepali translation done by the author himself. The following is a summary of his account of the festival of Matsyendranath which gives several interesting details.

Every twelve years there is a festival of Matsyendranath beginning from the village of Bungamati, which is also called Amarawati. Other years the festival is held in Patan only. The day for the beginning of the Chariot Festival is Baisakh Pratipada. On that day the general populace, especially the boys under twelve years of age, tie on their necks a piece of thread which has been spun by the young girls as a protective amulet. The seeds of a certain herb are ground to the accompaniment of a mantra and the oil is drunk as a protection against all sorts of poisons. The people pray that the Lord Lokesvara will protect them every day. During the procession a golden banner with eight auspicious signs, including the face of lion, is carried along. Instruments are played and thousands of people come. On the main beam of the chariot is a golden face of Hayagriva Bhairava; on the other beams are the nagas. Two Brahmans, impersonating Brahma and Narad Risi stand in the front of the chariot and encourage the rope pullers. In this way the auspicious festival of the Crown of the gods, Matsyendranath, is held. Even if the beam of the chariot should break, the festival proceeds. Dhritarastra, Birupak, Birujaksa, and Vaisravana, the four guardians, carry the chariot along. Even though the great green covered tower may sway, the priest and the king on the platform of the golden shrine remain steady. The Brahman in charge of the pulling of the chariot encourages the musicians and the broken beam is quickly repaired. Wherever the chariot goes the people pray,

'May Lokanath Matsyendranath protect us.'[53]

In the last chapter it was pointed out that the legends associate the coming of Matsyendranath-Lokesvara with Narendradev. However, there is very little reliable historical evidence to indicate just when or how the cult began. The above references give at least a few points which should help towards building up a historical outline of the development of the cult.

1. Beginning of the cult of Matsyendranath. The earliest references to Bugma Lokesvara pertain to the time of Narendradev and to the time of Balarjunadeva.[54] Though the document was written only in the late fourteenth century, it gives some certainty of the presence of the cult before the beginning of the Nepal Era (879 A.D.). The next reference to Bugma Avalokitesvara is in the Tibetan biography of the early 13th century.[55] In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries there are the references cited in connection with the Khasya invasions.[56]

References to Lokeśvara or Aryalokitesvara in Licchavi times have been omitted. There are statues of Aryalokitesvara dating from as early as the sixth century A.D.[57] However these images were not found in Patan, much less in Bungamati, and they do not show any connection with Matsyendranath nor with Buñga Deva. It is hard to agree with Dr. Regmi's statement that an inscription of Jayadev II which mentions Lokanath 'shows that the cult of Avalokitesvara Matsyendranath

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[53]Bajracharya, Dhanabajra, ed, Triratna Saundarya Gathā, Pandit Sundarananda (Kāṭhmanḍū, 2019), p. 138-140.
[54]Confer p. 65 and footnote No. 7.
[55]Confer p. 65 and footnote No. 7.
[56]Confer p. 65 and footnote No. 7.
[57]Hit Narayan Jha, The Licchavis (Varanasi, 1970), p. 188; confer also D.R. Regmi, Ancient Nepal 3rd ed. (Calcutta, 1969), p. 197.

was introduced into this country in that century'.[58] Such references show that Avalokitesvara was known at that time; but it is rather begging the question to conclude to the existence of a cult of Matsyendranath or Bunga Deva, or to an identification of the three in that age, unless there is some corroborating historical evidence. There were, and still are, many statues of Avalokitesvara which have nothing to do with Matsyendranath or Bunga Deva.

2. Beginning of the jātra. The earliest reference to the jātra is found in the Gopālaraja Vamśāvali. The next reference is in the 13th century Tibetan biography. Details, such as the time of the festival, have changed since that time, but it is recognizably the same deity and the same festival. The change of time is interesting as it indicates a change in the meaning of the festival. The festival is held now at the beginning of the monsoon, and is universally looked upon as a petition for timely rain for the summer crops. When and why was it changed from autumn to early summer?

3. Name of the deity. The Tibetan Biography speaks of Bu-kham, and of Avalokitesvara. The Gopālarāja Vamśāvali speaks only of Bugma Lokesvara. Newari inscriptions, thyāsaphūs, manuscripts, and chronicles speak only of Bungma Deva, Lokesvara, Aryalokitesvar, or Lokanath. The only exceptions to this are: the inscription cited by Briggs (1672),[59] the 1746 inscription on the chariot,[60] and the Newari inscription of 1748 in the Vishnu temple of Sundhara.[61] In these cases a form of Matsyendranath has been used. Dr. Regmi speaks of a poem written in the time of Srinivasa Malla (1677) which refers the deity to the trinity of the Saiva Pantheon

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[58]Regmi, Ancient Nepal, p. 197
[59]Confer p. 70 and footnote No. 24.
[60]Confer p. 76 and footnote No. 45.
[61]Confer p. 77 and footnote No. 48.

and the five enlightened of the Buddhist world. He does not say whether the poem identifies him with Matsyendranath.[62] The later chronicles, written in Nepali in the 19th century, speak of Macchendranath only.

This evidence indicates that the deity was known first as Bunga Deva and then invariably as Bungma Lokesvara, Lokanath, or Aryalokitesvara until the middle of the 18th century of possibly the later part of the 17th century. After this he was occasionally also called Matsyendranath, until after the Gorkhali conquest when the name Matsyendranath became more popular everywhere except in Patan and Bungamati, where the deity is still more commonly referred to by the earlier names. This conclusion is of course contingent on the finding of further historical evidence, but at present there is no evidence of the name Matsyendranath being used before this time. Dr. Regmi says that Bungma Lokesvara does not adopt the form of Siddha Matsyendranath till the 14th century.[63] However, he cites no reference to Matsyendranath between the 14th and the 17th centuries, nor have any come to light in the research done for this thesis.

4. Importance of Matsyendranath. Since the time of the earliest references he has assumed an important place in the cultural life of the Valley. The Gopālarāja Vaṁśāvalī merely mentions Bunga Deva, without explanation, as a name and a festival that would be known by anyone reading the chronicle. The Tibetan singles this festival out for description from among all the festivals that must have taken place during his stay in the Valley. In the Gopālrāja Vaṁśāvali the Khasya Malla rulers are described as visiting two places of worship, Pashupatinath and Bungamati. Throughout the early Malla period the kings participated in the festival though their capital was not in Patan. After the separation of the kingdoms there are references to nearly every king of

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[62] Regmi, Medieval Nepal, i. 573.
[63] Regmi, Medieval Nepal, i. 573.

Patan and his connection with the festival. The whole social and religious life of Patan seems to revolve round this festival. Any mishap during the festival is an evil omen of disasters to come; the king must take part in the festival, and if he does not it is worthy of deprecating comment in the chronicle; the rites and ceremonies to be followed are set out in an inscription by the king as are the duties of all connected with the festival. Those who fail in their duties and spoil the festival are guilty of sacrilege and treason. If one remembers the disasters and breakdowns as well as the interpretations given to these disasters in the years before Srinivasa put up the inscription, one can see why the inscription was put up and why the king attached so much importance to the proper celebration of this festival.

Though the festival was known throughout the Valley and the kings of the other cities did, at least on occasion, attend the festival, it does not seem to have attained such importance outside of Patan. Most of the thyāsaphū references are found in the ones composed in Patan. The few references to the festival after the Gorkhali conquest are found only in the Rājvamaśāvali.

5. Conduct of the festival. The festival is recognizably the same from the reference in the Tibetan biography to the present. The longer descriptions given in Srinivasa Malla's inscription and in the few long descriptions found in the thyāsaphūs describe the festival almost exactly as it is still conducted. One reference from Srinivasa Malla's time refers to the priests at Bungamati and the changing of the priests on duty, undoubtedly a reference to the Pāñjus.

6. The bhoṭo festival. There is no reference in any of the data to the 'showing of the bhoṭo.' There are references to the termination of the festival at Jawalakhel, but no mention of the bhoṭo. Failure to mention it of course does not prove it was not part of

the festival, especially since none of the accounts pretend to be complete descriptions of the ceremonial. However, the complete absence of any mention, gives one pause.

The few foreign observers who visited Nepal before the end of the Rana regime and subsequently wrote accounts of their stay here have mentioned the Chariot Festival.

The first is Fr. Guiseppe who lived in Patan the last few years before the city was taken by the Gorkhali conquerors. His house adjoined the temple at Taha Bahal, but he knew the deity only as Bhagero, evidently a corruption of Bungadeo that is not too surprising if one remembers the difficulty a foreigner might have in distinguishing d and r.

> In the city of Lelit Pattan the temple of Bhagero was contiguous to my habitation, and was more valuable, on account of the gold, silver, and jewels it contained, than even the house of the king.[64]

Commenting on the chariot festival he says:

> They observe also particular festivals, the principal of which is called Yatra in their language, and continues a month or longer, according to the pleasure of the king. The ceremony consists in drawing an idol, which at Lelit Pattan is called Baghero, in a large and richly ornamented car, covered with gilt copper; round about the idol stand the king and the principal Baryesus; and in this manner the vehicle is almost every day drawn through some one of the streets of the city by the

[64] Fr. Giuseppe, 'Account of the Kingdom of Nepal 1767-1771, Asiatick Researches, ii. (1801).

inhabitants, who run about beating and playing upon every kind of instrument their country affords.[65]

The next visitor who wrote about Nepal was Col. Kirkpatrick who visited Kathmandu in 1793. He gives a short account of the festival, noting that it is the one referred to by Pere Giuseppe. He also has a brief note on the temple in Taha Bahal with a short account of the legends. The festival does not assume the importance it does in the account of Fr. Giuseppe; it is merely one among many festivals. However, one must remember that Kirkpatrick did not witness the festival. He stayed in the Valley only about three weeks and gathered his information from informants supplied by the darbār.

The longest and most accurate account by far is that given by Dr. Oldfield, who was attached to the British residency from 1850 to 1862. He must have witnessed the festival several times and he was a keen observer. He lists the festival as the most important Buddhist festival in Nepal. The very detailed description he gives shows that the festival has not changed significantly in the last hundred years. However, he mistakenly identifies the two images as Matsyendranath, with no mention of Minnath.[66] He gives the first description of the showing of the bhoṭo, describing how the bhoṭo is shown from each side of the chariot and how the people prostrate themselves and touch their heads to the ground to salute it, or simply salaam it.[67]

He also gives a brief description of the 12 year festival which took place in 1848. Elephants were used

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[65]Guiseppe, op. cit., p.
[66]H.A. Oldfield, Sketches from Nepal, (London, 1880), ii. 331.
[67]Oldfield, op. cit., ii. 334.

to get the chariot over the streams.[68] Two things he mentioned have changed:

> During the whole time that the Machendra jatra lasts, the Darbar appoints a Sardar, with a company of soldiers, to remain with the cars. This is done not so much as a tribute of respect to the deity as to ensure order and prevent any breach of the peace on the part of the Newars, who form the largest portion of the crowd.
>
> The King, Minister, and principal Sardars, all in full costume and mounted on elephants with a large retinue of followers on horse-back, and the Rifle Regiment leading the way, and with the band playing, usually visit Patan and see the procession on the day on which the car is dragged from the Golden spring to Narendra's tree. . . .
>
> Though the King, Sardars, and Gorkhas go generally to see the spectacle, they go merely as spectators.[69]

The King no longer attends this part of the festival and a company of soldiers is not currently assigned. Under the influence of modern mechanization the elephants were replaced by a tractor in the twelve year festival of 2024.

Dr. Wright who was in Nepal around 1877 has given a short account of the festival. He notes that the day of the showing of the bhoṭo is called Gudrijhar. The bhoṭo, however, he identifies as a blanket.[70]

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[68]Oldfield, op cit., ii. 336.
[69]Oldfield, op. cit., ii. 336-37.
[70]Wright, op. cit., p. 21.

Sylvain Levi, who visited Nepal in 1898, gives a rather thorough description of the festival and a full account of the legends. He too comments that tne most important stage of the procession is the part from Sundhara to Lagankhel, when the King, the Prime Minister, and the eminent people of the state take part mounted on elephants.[71] He describes the showing of the bhoto and how the people prostrate to show reverence. He then repeats the same explanation given by Wright, i.e. that this is to show the deity takes nothing away from the people.[72] He concludes by noting that the Chariot Festival is believed to bring rain infallibly. This accounts for its importance, as almost the whole of the population are engaged in agriculture and hence their livelihood depends on timely rain.

Percy Brown who published his book in 1912, gives a short but very colourful account of the festival. Still in 1912 the King and the Prime Minister used to accompany the procession on elephants.[73]

Percy Landon has a brief account of the festival of 1924 when he was taken to the final ceremonies by the Prime Minister,.Chandra Shamsher. It was an exceptionally dry year and there was a shortage of water, but no one was worried and all told him that as soon as the bhoto was shown there would be rain. Following is his account:

> Now on the afternoon of 8th June 1924 the Maharaja sent a car to the Baber Mahal, which his son had lent to me, as he thought it might interest me to witness this, the greatest of all Nepalese annual festivals. It was once more a sunny day, and the dust raised by the thousands who came out from Kathmandu to see the exhibition of the god hung in the hot still air and from a long distance

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[71]Sylvain Levi, Le Nepal, (Paris, 1905) ii. 50.
[72]Levi, op. cit., ii. 51.
[73]Percy Brown, Picturesque Nepal, (London, 1912), p. 106.

> marked out the course of the roads. There was a little delay, and the heavens may have been preparing their coup while I was watching with keen interest the presentation to the dense crowds of the coat worn by the god--a regular preliminary to the presentation of the figure of Machendranath himself. The Maharaja motored up in time to be present when the curious red-wrapped figure was taken from the inside of the car and shown to the seething multitude. A spot of rain struck me at this moment, and in twenty seconds we were hastily putting up the top of the car against a driving downpour of huge drops that continued for nearly an hour, and was repeated twice or thrice before nightfall. So all went happily to sleep that night. In what seemed to me uncannily like magic the folk of the Valley saw only the normal kindliness of Machendranath. The car was shortly afterwards pulled to Bugamati. Four or five days later it returned to Patan and was there taken to pieces.[74]

Most probably his comment about the chariot being taken back to Bungamati is erroneous. This should not have been a year of the 12 year festival as that would have taken place in 1920.

The festival then is still observed today as it was during the last century though there is not so much ceremony surrounding some parts of it as there was during the Rana days; and except for the last three days in Jawalakhel, the festival does not attract large numbers of people from other areas besides Patan.

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[74]Perceval Landon, Nepal (London, 1928), ii. 13-14.

Chapter Five
The Identity of Rato Matsyendranath

Having considered the legendary accounts of the coming of Matsyendranath and the historical evidence of his cult and festival, it remains to conclude with a few considerations on the identity of Rato Matsyendranath of Patan in the broader context of North Indian Buddhism and the Nath cult. This will be followed by a brief summary and evaluation of the various theories which have attempted to explain the origin and development of the cult in Nepal.

Avalokitesvara is a member of the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon, a Bodhisattva emanating from the Dhyani Buddha, Amitabha, and his Sakti, Pandara. He is said to be the Bodhisattva who rules during the period between the disappearance of the Mortal Buddha and the coming of the future Buddha, Maitreya.[1] His origin seems to go back to the time of the Mahasanghikas, who were the fore runners of the development that eventually became known as the Mahayana.

> The conception of Avalokitesvara is as old as the third century B.C. He was first ushered into existence by the Mahasanghikas, about the time of Asoka, in their work entitled, Mahavasty Avadana, where he has been characterised as the 'Bhagavan who takes the form of a Bodhisattva, whose duty it is to look round (Avalokita) for the sake of instructing the people and for their constant welfare and happiness'. This Avalokita Bodhisattva no doubt gave rise to the concrete form of Avalokitesvara, even before the second century A.D.[2]

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[1]Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, The Indian Buddhist Iconography, 2nd ed, (Calcutta, 1968), p. 124.
[2]Benoytish Bhattacharyya, The Indian Buddhist Iconography, p. 143.

The Chinese pilgrims found the worship of Avalokitesvara prevalent in India from the fourth to the seventh century, and images of Avalokitesvara are quite common among the archeological finds both in India and Nepal.[3] The images are ordinarily well decorated and of the fifteen forms of Avalokitesvara described by Bhattacharyya fourteen bear the image of Amitabha on the crown.[4] This is the lotus family and he is often pictured holding a lotus, hence the name Padmapani. The colour of the family of Amitabha is red; however many of the forms of Avalokitesvara are white. The Sādhana Mālā states that a single deity may be any colour according to the particular tantric rite in which he is invoked.[5]

Avalokitesvara is the personification of compassion, hence the name Karunamaya. He is full of mercy and extends his helping hand to all those who seek his aid in distress. From the very beginning there seems to have been a tendency to identify him with other gods. As Buddhism spread to other lands and cultures earlier gods were identified as forms of Avalokitesvara and thus integrated into the new faith. The Sukhavati Vyūha, a mahayanist work translated into Chinese between 148 and 170 A.D., is the first text to mention him. A passage in the Kāraṇḍavyūha says he manifests all possible forms of the godhead for the sake of the ignorant and to bring salvation to mankind.

> As different people belonged to different faiths, this compassionate Bodhisattva was obliged to assume the shape of all gods of all faiths, nay, even the shape of father

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[3]R.C. Majumdar, ed. gen. The History and Culture of the Indian People, iii. "The Classical Age " (Bombay, 1962), p. 380.

[4]Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, The Indian Buddhist Iconography, p. 125.

[5]Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, The Indian Buddhist Iconography, p.144.

and mother.[6]

At the Matsyendranath Temple in Kathmandu there are pictures of 108 different forms of Avalokitesvara.

Chariot festivals also appear to have been a common feature of Indian Buddhism of this period. Both Fa-hien and Hiuen Tsang describe such festivals. Following is Fa-hien's description of such a procession at Khotan.

> On a four-wheeled chariot is seated in the centre the image of Buddha with two Bodhisattvas on the two sides. The chariot is decorated with seven precious stones, silken streamers and canopies. The Mahayanic monks of Gomati led the procession.[7]

Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath may well have been historical figures and they are closely connected with the yogi mendicants called the kān-phata yogis, so called because of the practice of wearing huge ear rings in pierced ears. Though such yogi mendicants have existed from the earliest times in India, and they and their practices are part of the religious heritage of the whole of India, the Nath cult seems to have originated in North or North-East Bengal and from there spread to other parts of India after the twelfth or thirteenth century. The earliest traditions of the cult are found in Bengali literature and stories concerned with the cult in other parts of India indicate that the main characters came from Bengal.[8]

There are many stories about the origin of Gorakhnath, some of them purely mythical and paralleling the stories in the Newari chronicle and the Bhāṣā Vamśāvali.

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[6]Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, The Indian Buddhist Iconography, p. 144.
[7]Quoted in Majumdar, op. cit., p. 381.
[8]Haridas Bhattacharyya, ed., The Cultural Heritage of India 2nd ed., (Calcutta, 1956), iv. 280.

Much has been written about whether or not Gorakhnath actually lived and though most authors concede that he was indeed an historical person, this is not entirely certain.[9] After a thorough sifting of all the available historical evidence Briggs concludes:

> Until further data are discovered the conclusion must be that Gorakhnath lived not later than A.D. 1200, probably early in the eleventh century and that he came originally from Eastern Bengal.[10]

In the tradition of the Nath cult Matsyendranath is universally accepted as the teacher of Gorakhnath, so he must have been a contemporary. His story is told in different forms by different groups. In most of the versions he is kept as a more or less voluntary captive of a tribe of women, has completely forgotten his yogic practices, and is eventually rescued from their grasp by his disciple Gorakhnath.

Though the Nath sect today is usually looked upon as a Saivite group, this was not always nor universally so. Among non-Bengali Nath yogis, Siva is not so important and some at least attribute the Saivite influence to Matsyendranath.[11] After pointing out the evidence of Gorakhnath's Vajrayan Buddhist connections, Briggs concludes that 'there is evidence from Bengal to show that Matsyendranath was a guru of the Nāthmārga who converted Gorakhnath from Buddhism to Saivism'. [12] On the other hand Matsyendranath is revered as one of the eighty-four Siddhas in the Tibetan Vajrayan tradition.[13] In western

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[9]Haridas Bhattacharyya, op. cit., p. 286.
[10]G.W. Briggs, Gorakhnath and the Kanphata Yogis, (Calcutta, 1958), p. 250.
[11]Haridas Bhattacharyya, op. cit., p. 281.
[12]Briggs, op. cit., p. 234.
[13]Agehananda Bharati, The Tantric Tradition, (London,1965), p. 224.

India the cult is associated with Vishnu, and there are even isolated instances of Jain and Islamic connections. Speaking of rāto Matsyendranath of Patan one Nepalese source has the following to say:

> Some call Matsyendranath Vishnu; some Saivites invoke him as Siva. The Saktas call the deity Kali or Tara. Some call him Narayan, some Aditya, some Brahma and some call him Matsyendranath. Some say that he is Lokesvara, some Karunamaya Bungadeva. In this way all sing his praises.[14]

This seeming confusion can be explained by two factors. Firstly, the sect was not primarily nor seriously theistic. Its fundamentals consisted in yogic practices and a philosophic conception of the Supreme Being which lent itself very admirably to identification with the gods of different sects. Secondly, much of the practice of the Nath yogis was tantric, and in the later stages these tantric practices were common to Saivism and Vajrayan Buddhism alike.

This last statement needs some explanation. Though the external practices were common, there were fundamental differences between Buddhist and Saivite Tantricism. The aims and objects of the two groups remained quite different. There is a fundamental philosophical difference between the Hindu concept of śakti, or divine power, and the Buddhist concept of prajña or knowledge.[15] In regard to the relation between the two the following should be kept in mind:

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[14]Bajracharya, Dhanabajra, ed. Triratna Saundarya Gāthā, Pandit Sundarananda (Kathmandu, 1019), p. 138-39.

[15]Confer Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism, 2nd ed, (Varanasi, 1964), p. 47.

> A comparison of the Hindu Tantras with those of Buddhism... not only shows an astonishing divergence of methods and aims, in spite of external similarities, but proves the spiritual and historical priority and originality of the Buddhist Tantras.
>
> Sankaracarya. . . made use of the ideas of Nagarjuna and his followers to such an extent that orthodox Hindus suspected him of being a secret devotee of Buddhism. In a similar way the Hindu Tantras too took over the methods and principles of Buddhist Tantrism and adapted them to their own purposes much as the Buddhists had adapted the age-old principles and techniques of yoga to their own systems of meditation.[16]

In the same vein Bhattacharyya concludes:

> It is possible to declare, without fear of contradiction, that the Buddhists were the first to introduce the Tantras into their religion, and that the Hindus borrowed them from the Buddhists in later times, and that it is idle to say that later Buddhism was an outcome of Saivism.[17]

Hence the Nath cult presents a combination of elements from Tantrism, Buddhism and Hinduism. It is a Siddha cult of ancient origin stressing control of the body through yogic practices. It makes use of an intricate pattern of rites and rituals which it would be hard to label Hindu or Buddhist, if one is meant to exclude the other. Rather it represents a heritage common to all the religious systems of India.

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[16]P.V. Bapat, ed., 2500 Years of Buddhism (Delhi, 1959), p. 361-63.

[17]Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism, p. 147.

The Nath cult in turn influenced different sects, though in the last stage the yogis were primarily Saivites.

The close association with Tantric practices brings up another consideration. In the esoteric language of Tantricism everything is symbolic. The words convey a second and esoteric level of meaning.

> Fish (Matsya). . . does not mean fish, but rather the senses, which must be kept under control, reduced to their inert and inactive potentialities, and rendered deaf to any appeal or invitation from the external world. Many ascetics were called Matsyendra or Minanath, 'lord of the fish' equivalent to 'master of the senses', and indicating that they had finally achieved control over their senses.[18]

This points up the fact that the name may not always have been used of a historical person, nor of the same historical person.

In the last chapter it was pointed out that in Nepal no references to the name Matsyendranath have come to light prior to the late 16th or 17th century, but the Nath sect and Gorakhnath were known in Nepal before that time, and must have been brought to Nepal shortly after the cult began to spread out of Eastern Bengal. There is a temple of Gorakhnath in Pharping with an inscription of Jayasthiti Malla. Hence the temple was in existence at the end of the fourteenth century.[19] The famous Kasthamandap temple of Kathmandu is a shrine of Gorakhnath, and though it is not certain when it was built, it contains an image of Gorakhnath which is surely from the

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[18]Guiseppe Tucci, Rati-Lila (Paris, 1969), p. 62, 73.

[19]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, i. 558.

early Malla period.[20] Though the image has also been identified as Loyipada Siddha, there is an inscription of Yaksha Malla attached to the temple which begins with a salutation to Gorakhnath and is dated N.S. 585 (1464 A.D.).[21] So Gorakhnath and the Nath cult were known in Nepal at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries.

Returning to the Matsyendranath of Patan, the question arises as to how Bungadeva, Avalokitesvara, and Matsyendranath came to be identified in the one image. Which of these identities came first and how was the subsequent change made? At the present time it is impossible to give definite and categorical answers to these questions. Much research is still to be done on the cultural history of the Malla period before there will be enough data to make definite answers possible. However, the information so far presented should set some limits to speculation, rule out certain possibilities, and perhaps give some foundation to other theories. Different theories have been offered by various authors and these will be briefly summarized below and commented upon.

The first author to treat the question of the origin of the Matsyendranath of Patan was Levi. He surmised that perhaps some yogis came from India during the time of Narendradev and found a local deity by the name of Buga which they recognised as a form of Lokesvara. In a later period when Buddhism was on the wane yogis of Gorakhnath came to Nepal. According to Taranath, these yogis had passed from Buddhism into Saivism and accepted Matsyendranath as their chieftain. Under their influence the deity was recognised as Matsyendranath.[22]

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[20]Ramesh Jung Thapa, 'Parisista', Ancient Nepal No. 5 (April, 1968), p. 38 and plate viii.
[21]Ramesh Jung Thapa, op. cit., p. 42.
[22]Sylvain Levi, Le Nepal (Paris, 1905), i. 356-57.

This theory is plausible and does not contradict any of the evidence presented above about the development of the cult. A time for this last metamorphosis of the deity could even be ventured, i.e. about the time of Jayasthiti Malla or shortly thereafter, since he is known to have venerated Gorakhnath and they could not have come to Nepal much before that. If this is so, however, the deity became known by the yogis as Matsyendranath, and perhaps by the ruling class in Bhaktapur who were more clearly Saivite, but not by the general populace of Patan and Bungamati. They were predominately Buddhist, and even when they became a separate kingdom, their King would refer to the deity consistently as Bungma Lokesvara, Avalokitesvara, etc., but not by the name of Matsyendranath, as shown by the inscription of Srinivasa Malla and the thyāsaphū references.

Gopal Singh Nepali repeats the theory of Levi with the comment that even before the time of Narendradev in the seventh century, Nepal must have had its own rain god, and it is not at all improbable that he was known as Buga or Buñga.[23]

According to Nepali the contention that Matsyendranath was introduced into the Valley during the time of Narendradev is confirmed by the Chinese traveller Wang Hiuen Tse.

> The Chinese traveller mentions that the people of Nepal shaved their heads to the level of their eye-brows, pierced their ears, wearing tubes of bamboos or oxen horns, and it was a mark of beauty to have the ears falling towards the shoulders. From such accounts we have the suggestion that the predecessors of the present Kanphata ascetics did live in the Valley around the period and we may attribute to them the

[23]Gopal Sing Nepali, The Newars, (Bombay, 1965), p. 318.

> introduction of the cult of Matsyendra Nath.... It thus undoubtedly points out the imposition of the term Machhendra on a local but influential deity which was perhaps then known only as Buga.[24]

This presentation is weak on a number of accounts. First, he seems to be attributing the introduction of the name Matsyendranath to the yogis of the seventh century, which is clearly impossible if Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath lived only in the twelfth century. Secondly, it takes no account of the name Avalokitesvara which was more commonly applied to the deity and certainly seems to be a name that was used prior to the introduction of the name Matsyendranath. Thirdly, the description of the Chinese Traveller indicates that the people pierced the lobes of their ears, put tubes into them, and that the ear lobes were thereby stretched down to the level of the shoulders. This is a common feature of Buddha images throughout Asia and is still a common feature of different types of yogis in India. Hence from this fact one cannot conclude to the presence of the yogis of Matsyendranath, especially in view of the fact that most scholars place Gorakhanath and Matsyendranath three hundred years after the time of Narendradev. Furthermore according to Farquhar this is not the way the Kanphata yogis pierce their ears. They 'have a great slit cut in the central hollow of each ear so as to admit a big circular ear ring of glass, wood, or horn'.[25] The ring is not the same type as those described by the Chinese, and being inserted in the harder cartilage of the central part of the ear it does not stretch the ear as described.

In his Buddhist Himalaya Dr. David Snellgrove notes that Matsyendranath is a yogin metamorphosed as

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[24]Nepali, op. cit., p. 319.
[25]J.N. Farquhar, An Outline of the Religious Literature of India (Varanasi, 1967), p. 347.

a God, and also identified as the Buddhist Lokesvara.[26] After noting that the later tantras originated among such yogis and were revered by Hindus and Buddhists alike he says that it is significant that the two principal deities of the Valley are Pasupatinath for the Hindus and Matsyendranath for the Buddhists.

> At this level of belief one can make no absolute distinction between what is Hindu and what is Buddhist. Matsyendra is a national divinity, honoured even by the Gurkhas. . . Pasupati may be Siva and Matsyendra may be Avalokitesvara, but both are one in Lokesvara, the Lord of the world, whose favourite abode is on the snow-peaks of the Himalaya.[27]

He extends the parallel by pointing out that the influence of these yogis must have been extensive and it can be seen in the names of so many shrines in Nepal, Hindu and Buddhist alike, e.g. Pasupatinath, Svyambhunath, Bauddhanath.

In regard to the festival he places great significance on the showing of the bhoto.

> It is not unlikely that the followers of this yogin really did preserve his shirt (perhaps his only garment) and that once in later times when the monsoon was delayed, it was brought forth and proved a sovereign remedy. It would have required no more than this for a yearly ceremony to be instituted, and before many generations passed, Matsyendranath would be remembered for this alone. The later account of how he was supplicated and brought to Nepal to end the drought, occasioned by his follower Gorakhnath, bears the marks of pure invention. . . .There

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[26] D.L. Snellgrove, Buddhist Himalaya (Oxford, 1957), p. 13.
[27] D.L. Snellgrove, op. cit., p. 113-114.

> would . . . be nothing unusual in a yogin receiving divine honours, for this was characteristic of the master-pupil relationship which was fundamental to tantric practice. . . . The above explanation of the origin of the monsoon-festival in his honour is of course pure hypothesis, though quite plausible.[28]

This account would perhaps explain the origin of the showing of the bhoṭo. It is entirely possible that Matsyendranath did visit Nepal-either the famous Nath yogi himself or another yogi of the same name or title, since the title could logically be applied to any yogi who had attained mastery of the senses. Perhaps he attained fame and a great following among the people and his bhoṭo was kept as a relic after he left or died. Then one year when the rain failed the bhoṭo was exhibited to petition rain, the rain came, and it became a regular rite. On this supposition the connection of the bhoṭo and Matsyendranath with the already existing festival and cult of Bugma-Lokesvara could have been made earlier or after this incident. It would not be illogical for the people to see him as a new manifestation of Avalokiteśvara either because of his reputation as a great yogi or as a result of the showing of the bhoto and the subsequent timely rainfall.

Though, as Dr. Snellgrove points out the theory is pure hypothesis it is plausible as an explanation of the custom of showing the bhoṭo. It does not explain the prior existing cult and festival of Bugma-Lokesvara. However, if this explanation is true, one would expect a more intimate connection to be shown between the bhoṭo and the deity in the legends which have grown up to explain it. As noted in a previous chapter the connection is quite accidental and none of the legends claim that the bhoṭo actually belonged to Matsyendranath.

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[28]Snellgrove, op. cit., p. 114-18.

Though the accounts are legendary, one would expect this central truth of the connection between Matsyendranath and the bhoṭo to be preserved and form the basis of the legend, if indeed this is how the custom began.

The following might be a more plausible theory. It was and still is the custom of people in north India to give old clothes or rags to these wandering yogis. This is considered a religious act and one that would gain merit for the donor. It is possible that, in imitation of this custom, some wealthy person, perhaps one of the Malla Kings, offered this jewel studded bhoṭo to Matsyendranath. It would then be shown each year in memory of this religious act, exactly as one of the legends recounts. The story of the Jyapu and Kartokata Nag Raja is clearly mythical and may well have been borrowed from some such source as Wright's chronicle which recounts the story without the connection to Matsyendranath.[29]

Dr. Snellgrove's earlier remarks about Lokesvara as lord of the world and hence showing a connection between the Buddhist Avalokitesvara and the Hindu Siva opens up a very interesting avenue of exploration. This is not the place to pursue it further, but others have noted the same connection. Briggs states, 'Matsyendranath represents the union of Pasupata Saivism and Buddhism in Nepal'.[30]

In his Nepālko Aitihāsik Rup Rekhā, Bal Chandra Sharma has quite a different theory.[31] He mentions that the Buddhists of Nepal had many festivals, one of the most notable of which was the festival of Avalokitesvara. Later legends connected Avalokitesvara with Gorakhnath and his guru Matsyendranath. He notes that there is much

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[29]Wright, op. cit., p. 107-08.
[30]Briggs, op. cit., p. 248.
[31]Balchandra Sharma, Nepalko Aitihasik Rup Rekha (Varanasi, 2022), p. 186.

difference of opinion about the origin and development of the festival among various writers. He then presents his own theory. Avalokitesvara was greatly revered by Tibetan Buddhists and the first great King of Tibet, Tsrong San-gampo, was eventually recognised as a manifestation of Avalokitesvara. Up to this time Nepalese Buddhism had looked to India for inspiration but after the time of Harshavardan, Buddhism was on the decline in India; and there was no revival of Buddhism in India after this. Consequently Buddhists in Nepal began to look to Tibet from the end of the Licchavi period onward. Hence, Sharma says, one can surmise that Avalokitesvara who was so respected in Tibet also came to be worshipped in Nepal. In regard to the chariot-festival, he says that it is possible that some Buddhist teacher may have first introduced this into Tibet from Eastern India. Later this festival was introduced into Nepal from Tibet towards the end of the Licchavi period. After the rise of the Nath cult in Nepal, the deity was renamed Matsyendranath.

The sequence of this theory is quite plausible, i.e. the beginning of the festival toward the end of the Licchavi period as a festival of Avalokitesvara, and its renaming at the time of the rise of the Nath cult. No mention, however, is made of Bugma deva. Furthermore, it doesn't seem necessary to look to Tibet for the introduction of the cult and festival of Avalokitesvara into Nepal. It was in the Licchavi period that Buddhism was first introduced into Tibet, and from that period right down to the time of the early Mallas, Tibetans looked to India and Nepal for inspiration. Monks from China and Tibet first went to India to study Buddhism, copy the scriptures, and learn Buddhist practices. After Buddhism declined in India Tibetans continued to come to Nepal for the same purpose. This is abundantly clear from works like the biography of Dharmasvamin quoted above, and the large number of manuscripts found in Tibet which were copied or translated in the monasteries of Patan right through the early Malla period. The

flow was the other way round and remained so until the Tibetans no longer felt the need to go outside of their country to deepen their understanding of Buddhism.[32]

Buddhism in Nepal, on the other hand, is clearly a branch of North Indian Buddhism. The monks of the vihāras of Nepal went to the great Buddhist universities of India to study; teachers came from there to teach in Nepal. The cult of Avalokitesvara grew up in India and spread wherever Mahayana Buddhism spread. Given the character assigned to Avalokitesvara it would be but natural that he be introduced to Nepal from India and identified with local gods, when Buddhism came to Nepal. The earliest references to Avalokitesvara in Nepal predate Narendradev and hence also predate the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet.

In regard to the Chariot Festival, it should be noted that chariot festivals were not a feature of Tibetan Buddhism, nor would one expect them to be so, given the terrain of Tibet and the lack of materials necessary to build such chariots. On the other hand chariot festivals were a feature of North India Buddhism at the time when the festival is supposed to have begun in Nepal. Due to the lack of data on the early development of the festival in Nepal, one cannot disprove the theory that the Chariot Festival of Avalokitesvara was introduced into Nepal from Tibet. However, in light of the above considerations it would seem highly unlikely, and rather a tortuous explanation.

The last theory is that of Surya Bikram Gywali, presented in his Nepāl Upatyākāko Madhyakālin Itihās.[33] There is an inscription of Amsuvarma, published by Bhagavanlal Indraji, No. 6, which speaks of a village called Bugayumi. It seems that since the people of that

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[32]Regmi, Medieval Nepal, i. 639.
[33]Surya Bikram Gywali, Nepal Upatyakako Madhyakalin Itihas (Kathmandu, 2019), p. 258-59.

village did not kill chickens, pigs, or fish they were granted some boon by the king. This village, Gywali notes, is the present Bungamati. In this same village is an image of the Bodhisattva (Avalokitesvara, Bugma deva) which is greatly revered by the Buddhists. This Bodhisattva is currently called Machendranath, a famous yogī of the Nath sect, and the festival is now called the festival of Matsyendranath. Hence it is logical to infer that the followers of the Nath sect made this deity their own and renamed it. In this way the followers of the Nath sect slowly attracted the Vajrayan Buddhists to their practices. Once their influence had increased among the Buddhist Newars, and they had brought many of them over to Hinduism it was an easy step to rename their principal deity Matsyendranath, after their famous Siddha.

Gywali goes on to note that in Nepal the word 'Hindu' was not used until modern times. The Buddhists in Nepal who had adopted Hinduism were known as Śiva-mārgis (those who followed the way of Siva). This word is important as it was the Nath sect of yogis, a Saivite sect, which converted these people to Hinduism.[34]

The Nath sect has greatly influenced the religious history of Nepal, Gyawali notes, and the vamśāvalis have many stories about Gorakhnath and Matsyendranath. The

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[34]What Gywali evidently means is that the word 'Hindu' was not used in ancient and medieval times in the restricted, religious sense that it is used today. The same was true of the use of the word in the whole subcontinent before the coming of the moslem rulers in India. It was used to mean 'Indian' and was a geographical and cultural term which implied the whole complexus of Indian life including all the 'religions' that flourished in ancient and medieval India. Similarily the word Śiva-mārgis was not used exclusively of those who had left Buddhism to follow the way of Siva. All who followed the way of Siva were Śiva-mārgis.

stories connect Narendradev with Gorakhnath and Matsyendranath which is clearly an historical impossibility, as scholars place the time of Gorakhnath between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries. Therefore they cannot have become influential in Nepal before the 12th century. It is in the twelfth century, or shortly thereafter, that many Buddhist Newars accepted the way of Siva. Furthermore, this change in the religious life of Nepal was given further legal sanction by the caste laws imposed by Jayasthiti Malla.

This theory has very much to commend it. The connection of Bugayumi might present the key to the early development of the cult and festival. Following on Levi's initial insight, if this village was such a thoroughly Buddhist village at the time of Amsuvarma, it could well be that its own local deity had been recognised early on as a form of Avalokitesvar and that subsequently a Chariot Festival was inaugurated in his honour in the time of Narendradev, or perhaps under his patronage, since he was known to have been very sympathetic to Buddhism. The Gopālarāja Vaṁśāvali supports this theory as does every subsequent account of the beginning of the festival, and the stories linking the beginnings with Gorakhnath and Matsyendranath are clearly later inventions.

All evidence indicates that the last development, i.e.the renaming of the deity Matsyendranath and the legends about Gorakhnath and Matsyendranath date to the later Malla period. However, the links of the chain of cause and effect are not at all clear here. Gyawali's last statement would not be accepted now. It has been argued and generally accepted by scholars that Jayasthiti Malla did not 'invent' caste for Nepal.[35] Traces of it are found in the earliest records of Nepalese history. Furthermore, it is against all the laws of social

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[35]Nayaraj Pant, 'Sthiti Malla Tathā Jātpāt', Pūrnīmā, No. 2, p. 1-1-.

behaviour that such a tightly knit and restrictive system as that attributed to Jayasthiti Malla could be imposed on a casteless society with a stroke of the pen. It won't work; yet it did work, so at most the system may have been reorganised or updated by him but not initiated. Even this reorganisation may be wrongly attributed to him; it may have been the work of Yaksha Malla or someone about his time.[36]

All of this however does not destroy Gyawali's theory, the reorganisation does reflect a cultural and religious change in the country, a trend toward a more orthodox Hindu society. It was not necessarily violent or abrupt. Such codifications usually come at the end of a period of gradual social change when the lawmakers begin to realise that the old legal structure no longer conforms to the reality of the current social situation. Hence the legal framework which must be used to regulate society, settle disputes, and in general insure the smooth running of the machinery of social life must be updated. The question of how much of this new code was imposed and how much was merely a reflection of accomplished social change cannot be completely answered at the present time. There simply is not enough data available.

From the religious standpoint, several remarks can be made, several questions remain. Firstly, the influence of the Nath cult was felt in Nepal by the time of Jayasthiti Malla. Did its influence precede him? Or was it something he sponsored and introduced into Nepal? How extensive was its influence? Was it merely one of many sects or orders of yogis or was it a primary factor in the shaping of the cultural and religious life of the period?

Secondly, it is known that in the later Malla period there was a strong influence of Maithila Brahmans in the courts of the Malla Kings and a definite growth in the

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[36]Confer Regmi, Medieval Nepal, i. 653-54.

influence of Saivite Tantricism, strongest in Bhaktapur, weakest in Patan.[37] This is evidenced by such things as the use of Maithili as a court language, the adoption of Taleju Bhavani as the ista devata of the Malla kings, and the erotic carvings on the many Saivite temples in all three Kingdoms. Tantric Saivism with connections to Simraonghar and Bengal certainly had court sanction and it was a living, dynamic force in country. How this influence came about and to what extent it revolutionized Newar society is a question disputed by scholars.

Thirdly, Buddhism had lost its vitality. Though Buddhism remained and still remains in the Valley, after the disappearance of Buddhism in India and the abandonment of true monastic life among the Buddhists in Nepal, it was cut off from its roots and ceased to be a dynamic force shaping the cultural and religious life of the country. The external practices of this late Vajrayan Buddhism had many similarities to the practices of Saivite Tantricism. The fundamental philosophical principals may have been quite different, but the ordinary people were not philosophers and the standard of scholarship among the Gubajus and Bandas had declined. In view of this it would be but natural that the legends of Gorakhnath and Matsyendranath and the new name for the deity would be readily accepted by all but the people of Patan and Bungamati who were most closely connected with the cult of Bungma-Lokesvara and would tend to be conservatives, traditionalists, the last to accept a change in the name of their traditional deity. To others of the time it would seem much more natural, up to date, and in accord with their religious beliefs to call this deity Matsyendranath.

Lastly, a word must be said about the cultural atmosphere of such a change. Above the word conversion has been used of Newars passing from the 'way of Buddha' to the 'way of Siva'; and the word used in Nepali is the

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[37] Confer Luciano Petech, Mediaeval History of Nepal, p. 186.

same as that used in the current constitution of Nepal to translate convert, i.e. tulyāunu (Bauddhaharūlāi hindū tulyāyekā). Yet the English word, at least, is entirely misleading in this context. It implies a 'turning away' from one definite clear-cut set of beliefs and practices to another clear-cut set of beliefs and practices. Such a distinction never existed between Buddhism and Hinduism in India. Writers contrast Hinduism and Buddhism as if they were two distinct religious traditions. In fact what they are really contrasting is Theravada Buddhism and modern Hinduism, an anachronistic comparison that precludes any real understanding of the relation between the two and the religious situation in India before the disappearance of Buddhism and the coming of the Moslem rulers. Theravada Buddhism represents the earliest Buddhist tradition. It was taken out of India and planted in other countries where it remained isolated from subsequent religious developments in India. Consequently if one wants to see the relationship between this and Hinduism it must be put back into context and compared with the religious situation in India at the time of which it was a part. Such a comparison, as has been done by Dr. Radhakrishnan, shows that the beginnings of Buddhism were rooted in the Upanishads and in the current Indian religious mood of the sixth century B.C.[38]

If one studies Buddhism in India at any period in the context of the over-all religious situation at that time he will find the same situation. Though there were isolated, and perhaps exaggerated, instances of Hindu rulers persecuting Buddhists, this antagonism was similar to the antagonism between other sects of Indian religion. It was not of the nature of a Hindu-Moslem antagonism. Commenting on the later Vajrayan developments which have scandalised so many students of Buddhism Dr. Snellgrove has expressed the relationship between Buddhism and Hinduism very well when he said:

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[38]S. Radhakrishnan, ed., tr., The Dhammapada, (Oxford, 1968), p. 260ff.

> We forget that . . . Buddhism, being one of several religions which grew and developed on Indian soil, was affected like all the others by the rich and extravagant tendencies which characterized medieval Indian civilization. . . . Indian styles of architecture with their stylized and symbolic arrangements, were then as much Buddhist as Hindu, for they were all part of the same cultural heritage. Likewise temple liturgies and techniques of yoga belonged to an Indian patrimony developed and enriched over the centuries by generations of worshippers and religious practicers, and the craftsmen who produced the images, religious paintings and temple decorations and ritual implements, worked in the same artistic mediums and styles. Saivite tantrism and Buddhist tantrism presumably developed as the different aspects, conditioned by their sectarian differences, of a common Indian development in Philosophical thinking, in approach to the gods, in building styles and all the rest. It is thus a misleading interpretation of events, if one assumes that Buddhism was now suddenly pervaded and corrupted by Hinduism. Throughout the one thousand seven hundred years of its long history in India, Buddhism could find no expression which was not part of the Indian scene.[39]

This same situation prevailed in Nepal where Buddhism survived after its disappearance in India, and to a large extent it continues today. Non-Nepali writers on social and cultural topics frequently comment on the difficulty they have experienced in trying to determine

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[39]Etienne Lamotte, Towards the Meeting with Buddhism (Rome, 1970), Appendix by D.L. Snellgrove, p. 129-30.

whether certain Newars are Hindu or Buddhist. Usually they end by saying that the only criterion is whether or not they call a Brahman or a Gubaju to their homes for religious services, and then have to add that even this is not always an accurate norm. They are expecting a clear-cut distinction that does not exist.

One must try to see the development of the cult and festival of Bugma-deva-Avalokitesvara-Matsyendranath in the light of this. Though there are differences between Hinduism and Indian and Nepalese Buddhism at any stage, sharp differences are confined to different philosophical explanations. On the level of religious practices, it is true that strongly sectarian groups, especially the Buddhist monks, are sectarian and restrictive in their practices; but this is not true of the populace at large. Among these lay folk there is little difference between Hindus and Buddhists in the daily religious practice and modes of devotion. It is perhaps this fact which explains, to a large extent, the gradual adoption of such practices by the Buddhist monks themselves in later Indian Buddhism and contemporary Newar Buddhism. Consequently a change of name such as took place in the case of the deity in question might have been made by the religious elite who understand a profound philosophical difference, but there would have been no sudden, jarring change in the religious life of the people. The festival continued on as before and such changes as took place were gradual and natural, for after all Śiva-mārgis and Bauddha-mārgis are all sharers of a common religious heritage.

Conclusion

This work began with a few remarks on the cultural development of the Valley and a hope that the proposed study would shed some light on the various strands which make up the intricate and rich fabric of this culture through the study of one particular image and the cult and festival which have grown around it. Answers to all of the questions arising from this study were not promised and, as is evident from this chapter, many unanswered questions remain, questions that can only be definitely answered after much more research has been done on the cultural history of ancient and medieval Nepal and a careful study has been made of the many Sanskrit and Ancient Newari manuscripts. However the gathering of the available data on Matsyendranath has resulted in some clarifications of ideas and trends, and some indications of what areas might be further explored in subsequent research--a consumation that would seem to have justified the work involved.

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